

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 499.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 25, 1907.

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• BLOWN OUT TO SEA; • OR, LOST AMONG A STRANGE RACE. *By CAPT THO'S H. WILSON.*



He approached nearer to the boy when Jack sprang at him, and tearing the whip from his hand he dropped it, and clutched him by the throat. The startled Fandiari uttered a loud cry, and staggered back.

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BLOWN OUT TO SEA

OR,

Lost Among a Strange Race

BY CAPTAIN THOS. H. WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARABS.

The sun was just rising beyond the far-distant mountains on an Arabian desert at the commencement of a November day, casting a glow of exquisite glory over the sandy plain and the calm seashore.

The desert in question stretched from the town of Mocha to the most southeastern extreme of the country of Yemen, where, near the shore of the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, which connects the Red Sea with the Arabian Sea, it was broken by a large oasis.

This cluster of rocks, shrubbery, and trees, was situated within a dozen yards of the coast, leaving a narrow strip of glaring white sand intervening, upon which a gentle surf was breaking.

The oasis comprised a mixture of aloe, date-palm, tamarind and fig trees, carpeted around by desert grass, creeping vines, and moss.

The outcropping rocks formed a Wadi, or hollow place, which the rain filled when it fell, thus making the spot a cool and pleasant retreat for any stray wayfarer, secure from the burning rays of the mid-day sun.

About one hundred fathoms from the shore, a large and handsome sloop-yacht had just come to an anchorage, the sails were furled, and a skiff had gone down from the port side, was manned by four people, and was pulled in toward that part of the shore nearest the oasis.

The two oarsmen were a negro and a white man, both attired in sailor suits of blue; in the bow sat a Chinaman in native costume, and in the stern was a white boy steering the boat.

The latter was no more than eighteen years of age, his well-built figure clad in a neat-fitting suit of light clothing of American make, a straw hat on his tawny hair, and his fair complexion tanned to a light brown, making his blue eyes show more plainly the slumbering fires of a passionate, impetuous nature.

He was intently regarding the shore, and the old sailor, rowing beside the negro, kept eyeing the boy in a querulous

manner, his black-bearded face wearing a look of anxiety in the meantime.

The negro, too, was evidently a little nervous, his smooth, shiny face often showing as he cast furtive side-glances at the boy.

Of all the boat's crew the Chinaman was, perhaps, the most careless.

He remained with his back turned to the rest unconcernedly, and watched the coast they were approaching with a listless, stolid expression upon his yellow face, and an indifferent look in his almond-shaped, beady black eyes.

"Bob Bowline!" exclaimed the youth, after an interval up silence.

"Ay—ay, sir," suddenly replied the sailor, looking up.

"There must be water in that oasis," said the boy, in tones of conviction, "for all that vegetation would not grow there unless there was. I am as sure that we will be able to fill our casks as I am that my name is Jack Woods."

"I hopes as how yer ain't wrong, sir," replied the sailor, "for all but one cask o' our water is gone, an' if we can't git none here ther good Lord on'y knows whar we kin git any more ter supply ther Orient."

"Golly, sah!" interposed the negro at this juncture, "dis chile fo' one wish dat yo' fader an' de odder gemmen hadn't done gwine fo' ter leabe us dis way, to go away on dat hun'in' esperditation. Mebbe dar ain't no watah in de place—den what we'se gwine ter do?"

"Oh, you need not fear, Samuel Brabb," laughed the boy. "As long as you have got a pack of cards in your pocket, and someone to gamble with, you have no dread of anything but losing a game."

"Ki! Ki!" interrupted the Chinaman at this moment, turning around with a serene grin upon his face, as if hugely pleased at what the boy said. "Allee light blame good speakee so! Him play pokee allee samee, an' cheatee Tau Kwong like som'll er glun!"

"Oh, you are just as bad, Tau Kwong, a regular gambler, and, like Sam, you are as big a cheat as ever existed!" said the boy.

This shot caused a solemn look to cross the face of the Chinaman, and as the darky burst out into a loud guffaw at

him, the little Celestial pulled a wry face, and suddenly resumed his study of the scenery on shore again, without saying a word in reply.

"Panther-hunting may be all very well for my father to follow up under some circumstances," said Jack Woods to Bowline, in earnest tones, "but I don't much fancy him taking so long a trip as this was just for the sport of the thing, even if he is with the English consul, and several nabobs from Cairo."

"Ay, but yer knows what a everlastin' hunter yer father is, my lad," said the old sailor, "an' seein' as ther British consul has jest bought this wessel, an' had it brung all the way from England to this country, it's no wonder as they wanted ter take advantage o' their vacation, by atakin' this long v'yage through ther Red Sea."

"True, but a 1,400-mile trip and back, occupying fully two months, is more than I bargained for," resentfully replied the youth.

The boy's disgust was perfectly natural.

His father was the American consul at Cairo, and an inveterate Nimrod; and when the English consul got his new boat, the Orient, and proposed this hunting expedition down the coast of the Red Sea, Mr. Woods accepted the invitation and brought his only son with the party of ten gentlemen who were invited.

The cruise was mapped out to extend as far as the beautiful vessel had gone when we find it, and the night before all hands had gone ashore a few miles below Mocha in pursuit of a panther, the presence of which had been reported to them by a native.

They had taken plenty arms and ammunition, and the five sailors who were Bob Bowline's messmates, leaving only Tau Kwong, the cook, Sam, the waiter, Bob, the quartermaster, and Jack on board.

Telling Jack to take command of the vessel and sail her down the coast to the oasis in quest of water, the party had gone away.

They were to tramp down to the anchorage and meet the yacht there at the conclusion of the hunt, as the distance from where they had debarked to the rendezvous was no more than a few miles.

This scheme was devised to save time, too, as the four could be filling the water casks while the party was hunting, and have everything in readiness for the return trip by the time the hunt was over.

The quarter-boat soon reached the surf, was beached, and all hands having gone ashore, Jack turned to the negro and said:

"You and Tau Kwong remain here until Bob and I return from an inspection of the oasis. Do not leave the boat, which you can launch when you see us coming back, as it is dangerous to keep her anchored without a soul on board. You both know what a fearful thing a monsoon storm is, as we experienced several during this trip. A sudden gale might come up and break the cable, send the yacht adrift, and here we would be without any means of getting back to Cairo."

"F'ore de Lawd, we'se gwine ter keep de bestest kind ob a watch, sah," asseverated Sam, in solemn tones. "Yo' doan' worry, sah."

"Hopec dle ifee bleakee word," asserted Tau Kwong, seriously.

This double assurance satisfied the boy, and he linked arms with Bob, and walked away toward the trees, from above the tops of which he was astonished to see a tiny column of smoke curling skyward, which clearly indicated that someone was there, hidden from his view.

The moment they were out of sight, though, the negro

and the Chinaman glanced at each other, Sam pulled a pack of cards from his pocket, and shaking them at his companion, he said in grim tones:

"Now, den, yo' yaller monkey, I'se gwine ter git squar wid yo' fo' de mean way yo' cheated me in de fo'cas'le las' night—you heah?"

"Blamee good," assented the Mongolian, with a nod, as he fished a handful of coins out of his pocket. "Puttee upee ante, and soonee see allee go samee way. Gitee umbeilella flom boat, an' sitee on san' so not missee looker boat. Gota stampee, allee samee?"

"'Specs I'se got more'n yo'," disdainfully said Sam, as he, too, drew a handful of coins out of his pocket, displaying them to the other.

The serene expression of Tau Kwong's face did not relax a trifle, although his heart beat a little faster upon seeing the negro's money.

Both of these servants of the American consul had profited by a lengthy residence in the United States among the western miners, to the extent of becoming expert gamblers, notorious cheats with the cards, and inordinately fond of that worst of all games, called poker.

They played against each other, cheated each other, and quarreled with each other over the cards, upon every occasion when they had a chance.

The little Chinaman brought a huge umbrella from the boat, and opening it out, he stood it on the sand, so that should Jack and Bob emerge from the trees, they would not see what they were doing.

They both sat down beneath the shade of the umbrella, and shuffling the cards, they put up the ante and began to play poker.

All absorbed in the game, they forgot all about the yacht, and everything else for the time being.

In the meantime Jack and Bob had gone on to the trees.

The boy called his companion's attention to the smoke he had seen, and knowing that someone was amid the trees, they proceeded with some caution, as they knew the Bedouins were not at all friendly to the white men in that section of the country.

They heard a low, droning sound as they merged in amid the trees, and Jack came to a pause, clutched his companion's arm, and said:

"They are Arabs, Bob—I know by that peculiar song, or adan. Don't you remember when we stopped at Mecca, and my father had the row with the sherif, in the great mosque, Beit Allah? A mueddin was chanting that same prayer at the time—just listen."

They came to a pause, and out from among the trees came these words in the Arabic tongue, chanted in a singular manner:

"Allah is most great. I testify that there is no God but Allah. I testify that Mohammed is the Apostle of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to security. Prayer is better than sleep. Allah is most great. There is no deity but Allah. He hath no companions—to Him belongeth the dominion—to Him belongeth praise. He giveth life and causeth death. And He is living, and shall never die. In his hand is blessing, and He is Almighty."

The boy and the sailor crept forward, and reaching a heap of rocks, they peered around a jutting ledge, and beheld a strange sight.

In the middle of a clearing stood a large tent, in front of which was the Sherif of Mecca, with his clasped hands and his eyes raised upward; in back of him knelt a muezzin, who was chanting, and a mufti, or chief priest, while all around the tent knelt a dozen Bedouins, with their foreheads touching the ground.

Still further back stood a horse and several camels with loads on their backs.

The Sherif was a man of medium stature, strong build, brown complexion, lofty mein, and had dark, flashing eyes, expressing all the passion, pride, poetry and emotion of his barbaric race.

"Why, Bob," gasped the boy, with a startled look, "he is the very same Sherif who quarreled with my father at Mecca, and swore to kill him and me because of the blow my father gave him."

"Lord bless us, then we'd better sheer away from here," said Bob.

At that moment the muezzin prayer was ended, and the two were on the point of going away as silently as they came, when a dark figure glided out from behind an adjacent mass of rocks, and stole up close, with a gleaming spear aimed at them.

It was a black man-servant, clad in a loin-cloth and turban.

As the two turned around, they came face to face with this formidable-looking person, and were very much startled.

He uttered a loud cry of alarm, and an instant afterwards the whole dusky band appeared around the edge of the rocks.

"White men!" exclaimed the Sherif, in good English, for, owing to the large number of pilgrims who daily thronged the mosque of which he had charge, he had, like many others of the people of Mecca, picked up a smattering of their language.

"Who are you?" he continued.

"American sailors from a vessel anchored off the shore," replied Jack, hoping that the sherif would not recognize him.

The Sheikh-al-Islam, as the mufti was called, glanced sharply at the boy, and hastily said to the sherif:

"He is the son of the Frankish dog who struck you in the mosque!"

"Allah, il Allah!" gasped the sherif, fairly turning pale with rage and trembling like an aspen. "Seize upon the mongrel, and by the beard of the prophet he shall be bow-strung."

Neither Jack nor Bob understood what he said, as he spoke in his native tongue, but they saw by the ferocious look that overspread his face that he had recognized them, and contemplated mischief.

"I am afraid that we are in for trouble, Bob," said Jack, uneasily.

"Ay, ay, sir. Are yer armed?" replied the old sailor.

"No. Not expecting to find use for a pistol here, of course I did not bring one. Let us run for it."

The sailor nodded, but just as they started to go the Bedouins—a fierce, wild-looking set, surrounded them menacingly.

"Lord help us, it's too late!" groaned Bob, despondently.

"Seize them, I say!" exclaimed the sherif, passionately.

He pointed at the two, and the Bedouins sprang upon the sailors, knocked them down, and made prisoners of them, despite their struggles.

"Now tie them to a tree," said the sherif, seeing that his command was carried out, "and we will proceed to the ship they spoke of, and as I know that most of them went ashore near Mecca, we will reap a rich harvest plundering their vessel. Afterwards we can return and kill them."

This plan suited the Bedouins perfectly, as they are incorrigible thieves, and as lawless a tribe as ever nomadically roamed the wilderness.

Jack and Bob were each bound to a date-palm, and the Arabs stole away toward the shore, where they soon emerged into sight of the yacht.

There was only one salvation for the boat, and that was for Sam and Tau Kwong to get away in the skiff before the Arabs gained it.

Unfortunately, though, at that moment the two worthies

in question were sitting under the big umbrella on the seashore, worked up to a furious pitch of excitement over a Jack-pot they were playing.

The umbrella hid them from the Arabs and concealed the approach of their enemies from their sight as well, as the natives stole out from amid the trees in back of them.

Jack-pot after Jack-pot had been played, every silver piastre they possessed was anteed up, and not having anything else to bet they wagered every rag they wore upon their backs in their frenzy.

Sam shuffled the cards, and they were cut by Tau Kwong and dealt.

The Chinaman discarded, receiving three cards from Sam, saw that they were valueless, deftly slipped them up his sleeve, and drew three Jacks out of the same place of concealment, which he placed very adroitly in his hand, making a four hand, as he already had one Jack.

Equally as dexterous, the darky having stacked the pack, helped himself from the bottom, while Tau Kwong was engaged at his little sleight-of-hand trick, and slyly dropped four cards on the heap.

Among the cards Sam stole were three jacks.

They raised and straddled the ante with pebbles at a furious rate.

Then Sam called his opponent.

Both hands were thrown down.

Sam held three Jacks, and Tau Kwong held four.

They both knew their villainy was exposed.

Their eyes gradually bulged, they recovered from the shock of amazement, they bounded to their feet, and rage giving place to their surprise, they flew at each other, to end the matter in a fight.

The Arabs were thoroughly startled at their sudden appearance, popping up from behind the umbrella so unexpectedly.

"Allah il Allah!" they shouted, coming to a pause.

Sam and Tau Kwong forgot all strife in the shock of amazement they experienced upon seeing the Arabs.

"Lawd amussy, dey am Bedouins!" yelled Sam, in affright.

"Lun foree boat!" excitedly cried Tau Kwong, snatching up the money.

It was evident to them that the natives were hostile in their intentions, and forgetting Jack and Bob, they ran for the seashore.

After them rushed the Bedouins, headed by the furious Sherif, and faster flew the fugitives for the skiff, which rolled in the surf.

Seizing the anchor, they tumbled into the boat one hundred yards in advance of the Arabs, pushed out into deep water, and rowed away, just in time to escape the spears that were aimed at them!

Disappointed of reaching the yacht, without the skiff, the Arabs returned to the oasis, determined to wreak their vengeance upon Jack and Bob, by taking their lives!

CHAPTER II.

THE PANTHER.

Left alone, tied to the date-palms, Jack and Bob glanced at one another despairingly for the space of a moment.

The boy was the first to break the silence.

"Bob, I am afraid our doom is sealed!" said he.

"Them ere Arabs is a pretty hard lot," said the old sailor, "an' once they takes ther notion in their blasted heads to git squar' wi' ye fer anything, thar's nuthin' in the whole blessed world as kin turn 'em from their objick, sir."

"If we could only manage to break these bonds and reach the shore before they get back," said the boy, "we could get off in the boat."

"Not much show ter do that," responded the sailor.

The trees to which they were tied were only separated from each other by a few yards, and were on the margin of the oasis, giving the two prisoners a clear and uninterrupted view of the shore of the Red Sea, and the broad expanse of sandy plains stretching away toward Mocha.

As Jack chanced to glance up, he saw a small cloud of dust down near the shore, and far off in back of it on the horizon a tiny speck, looking like a black storm-cloud, coming up in the sky behind the distant mountain-peaks, over which the sun was rising.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What is that, Bob, off to the northward? It looks as if there was a tiny whirlwind in the sandy beach.

The sailor glanced off in the direction Jack mentioned, and saw what the boy spoke of, but could not make out what it was.

"Might be one o' them leetle sand-storms as we see often at Cairo, sir," said he, speculatively. "But bless me if I can make it out."

He caught the knot of the thong that bound him to the tree, as he said this, and began to pick at it with the tip of his fingers.

To his joy he found that he could loosen it.

A moment later he managed to untie the knot, and the thong slipped from his wrists, leaving him free, save for the bonds on his legs.

Jack was looking at the speck in the sky, and Bob drew out his sheath-knife, and cut the thongs binding his limbs.

"Free!" he exclaimed, causing Jack to look up with a start.

"Good heaven, Bob, how did you do it?" demanded the boy, joyfully.

"Ther knot a-tyin' my hands was near enough 'ter untie, an' I took advantage o' it," gleefully replied the old sailor.

"Cut my bonds—quick! I hea the Arabs coming back!"

"Gee whiz! So they is! Here, my hearty!"

He started toward the boy to sever the thongs, when there sounded a loud and angry shout behind him, in the voices of the Bedouins. He glanced over his shoulder, and to his dismay he saw that the natives were almost upon him, in a towering passion.

"Run—run for your life, Bob!" excitedly shouted Jack.

"No, dash it, le' me save yer fust, lad!"

"Go—go, I tell you, Bob!"

"I'll be blowed if I will,"

There came a sharp, sibilant hiss close to his ear, and the tramping of many feet behind him, as he muttered these words.

Bob's intentions were good, but his better sense prevailed, as he saw that to remain would insure his death at the hands of the Arabs.

Moreover, he knew that if they did not kill the boy at once he might have a chance to rescue Jack on some more favorable occasion.

Accordingly, he sprang toward the camels, crying cheerily:

"I'll try ter save yer later on, Mr. Woods."

There was a beautiful Arabian horse standing among the camels, and Bob was not slow to see it, seize the bridle, spring into the saddle, and urge the beast away over the plain, at a furious pace.

The sherif uttered a wild cry of rage, for the horse was his own favorite steed, and an Arab thinks more of his horse than anything else in the world beside himself.

He gave utterance to a peculiar cry, and Jack was dismayed to see the intelligent beast recognize its master's voice, pause, rearing up on its haunches, wheel around, and come racing back.

Again and again the Arab sherif vented that strange cry.

Bob was struggling with might and main to master the

horse, and swerve it away toward the plain again, but it was utterly useless.

The horse was carefully trained, loyal to its master, and a fiery beast, which he did not know how to manage at all.

"If ther brute keeps on this tack he'll sail me back to ther port as I jist cleared from!" thought the sailor, "an' that won't do, nohow! I reckon as this'll bring 'im off on another tack, though!"

He ripped off his handkerchief, rapidly bound it around the horse's eyes, tied it, and jabbing his knife in the steed's neck, he caused it to rear up once more, pivot around, and confused, startled and frightened, it dashed away from the oasis again, beyond Bob's control.

Jack could not suppress a loud cheer, that reached the sailor's ears, and as Bob turned in the saddle, and waved his hand to the boy, the horse disappeared in a cloud of sand, despite the repeated cries of the sherif to bring the beast back!

"Safe, safe!" exclaimed the delighted boy, forgetting his own danger in the excitement of the moment.

"Though he may be, your are not," exclaimed a deep, sonorous voice beside the boy, "and for the base robbery he has committed, you shall suffer the consequence, augmented ten-fold!"

Jack stared, turned pale, and glanced around.

Beside him stood the sherif with a dark frown upon his brown face and a wicked gleam in his snaky black eyes.

The Bedouins were grouped in a cluster in back of him.

Every face wore a scowl, for they were furious at having been cheated out of what they expected to steal out of the yacht.

"Why should you wreak the vengeance you owe to my father on me?" asked Jack. "I never did you any harm."

"Hating your father as I do," hissed the sherif, "for the indignity and degradation to which he subjected me at the holy mosque of Beit Ullah, before the kalib, mufti, and muezzin, by sacrificing your life he will more keenly feel the effect of my malice. Not a Bedouin in the province of Yemen but would lay down his life for me, and when your parent is met by the sacred Koran he shall perish."

This was a very solemn vow for a Mohammedan to take, and Jack knew that the white-bearded rascal meant it, too.

He lifted his green turban (the mark of his nobility) as he spoke, and all the Moslem passion in his nature flashed from his eyes.

"I think your principle is a very bad one!" exclaimed Jack.

"You have no right to question the actions of a descendant of Mohammed, through his daughter Fatima and Ali," haughtily said the Arab. "Your friend is a knavish thief, stealing my steed, which is the only one for my use in the caravan, and leaving me only the back of a camel upon which to travel. I shall bring you back to Mecca with me, and have you either bow-strung or beheaded, you young infidel dog!"

"If you do," said Jack, threateningly, "my father, as the American consul, will demand satisfaction of your khedive, and you will have to suffer death for having ruthlessly killed a citizen of the United States of America. You see, it won't pay you to murder me!"

"Your father is the American consul?" queried the Arab, amazed.

"Of course he is. You had no right to insult him at Mecca."

"I did not know his rank—but I care not!"

"Do as you like—you will sweat for it, though!"

"Where is your father now?"

"He has not joined the vessel yet."

"As I imagined. Then only the black and the Chinaman are on board."

"Thank Heaven they have not yet robbed the yacht!" muttered Jack.

"In that case," said the sherif, "we will outwit the two people of color, and yet get on board the boat and recompense ourselves for the robbery of my horse. But could the camels have traveled as fast as the steed I would have ordered the Bedouins to have pursued the thief who stole my beautiful charger. As it is, he must escape."

At this juncture one of the Bedouins who had seen the approaching cloud of dust on the seashore suddenly exclaimed in Arabic:

"Behold a band of men are coming."

"I expect the kishlar-aga. Perhaps it is he."

"No, your highness; they are white men."

This news startled the whole band.

"Then they must be the father and friends of this boy."

"Whosoever they be they outnumber us, I fear."

"Then mount, and we will away for aid to massacre the whole party," exclaimed the Sherif; "I will take charge of the boy."

There were ten camels among the trees, and they at once got them in readiness, some mounting two on one beast.

The Sherif liberated the boy from the tree, and aided by his black servant, he got upon the back of the beast, and the boy was handed up to him and planted in front of the old rascal.

This was hardly accomplished when those of the Bedouins who were on the margin of the oasis set up a loud shouting and hastily ran to the camels they were to ride and made frantic efforts to get upon their backs, meantime shouting in terror stricken tones:

"The panther! The panther!"

Jack did not understand what they were shouting, but being alarmed at the evident fear of the natives he glanced curiously around and saw what had occasioned their alarm.

Up along the sea shore came the party of gentlemen with whom his father had gone, and the whole party were in pursuit of a tremendous Arabian panther, which had been bounding on ahead of them out of range of their rifles and pistols.

It was the men and the beast who made the tiny cloud of dust which Jack had observed and to which he had called Bob's attention.

The panther had been wounded, but was not disabled, and was running toward the oasis, as it was the only shelter anywhere near.

At the moment that Jack saw it the big beast was just in the act of entering the shadow of the trees, a short distance away from where the camel stood upon which he was mounted with the Sherif.

"My father! Oh, my father!" gasped the boy, with a thrill of joy. "He will save me from this fiend as soon as he finds that I am a helpless prisoner in the hands of these monsters."

"Do not be sure of that!" growled the Sherif, who overheard what he said. "I will kill you before I shall let them save you from my hands. Nothing shall prevent me from having my revenge."

The boy's hands had necessarily to be liberated, when the Sherif cut his bonds to take him away from the tree.

The sight of his father filled Jack with renewed courage, and despite the fact that the Arab held him in a vise-like grip, he began to struggle to get away, as the camel arose to its feet from the kneeling posture it had taken at a word of command, so that the Sherif could mount its back.

"You shall not hold me!" panted the boy, angrily.

"Keep still!" admonished the furious sherif, as he clutched Jack's wrists, and drew a long dagger from his belt. "If you persist in fighting, I will bury this blade in your heart!"

He raised the dagger over the boy's bosom, and Jack saw by

the malignant expression on his face that he was terribly in earnest.

Succeeding in wrenching his right hand free, as he was a powerful chap, Jack suddenly struck the Arab a violent blow in the face.

Abdul Hassan, as the sherif was named, uttered a wild cry of anger.

He was blinded by the unexpected blow for an instant, and before he could recover himself, Jack struck him again with his fist.

He warded off the blow with the hand that held the knife.

The shock knocked the gleaming blade to the ground, and seeing that he now had a more even chance with his enemy, Jack began to furiously struggle to get the best of his adversary.

The sherif was a strong man, though, despite his possible fifty years, and aroused to the pitch of desperation at the prospect of being foiled in his attempt to satiate his vengeance, he fought with all the ungovernable passion he was capable.

In the struggle, Jack's legs became freed of the bonds that held them, giving him a greater advantage than he had while tied.

But the place where he was fighting was not only dangerous, but also circumscribed, as the back of the camel was laden with several packs between the neck and hump, pieces of slippery, well-worn skin acting in the capacity of a saddle in back.

While the struggle was at its height the hunters came running up to see who the Arabs were, and warn them to look out for the panther.

Jack's father was one of the foremost to enter the oasis, and his attention was attracted toward the struggling pair on the camel's back the very first thing.

One glance showed him that one of the combatants was his own son.

"Jack, what is the matter?" he shouted, in alarmed tones.

"Father, save me, for mercy's sake!" he shouted.

"They are carrying him off!" exclaimed the English consul, coming up.

"Abdū! Hassan, the Sherif of Meccā, has got me!" yelled Jack.

"Silence!" roared the Arab, trying to throttle the boy.

"I won't keep still. You will have to pay for this!" panted Jack.

Just then there sounded a sudden whir in amid the bushes near by, followed by a loud snarl, and the following moment out from the shrubs sprang the panther, its big, red mouth wide open, its long tail lashing the ground, and its hair bristling all over with rage.

It came to a pause close to the frightened camel, its vicious eyes balefully glaring at the struggling pair.

The two consuls retreated, and raised their rifles to fire, but before they could carry out this intention the beast crouched back to spring at the two who were upon the camel's back.

The hour of my vengeance has come!" fiercely cried the sherif, his black eyes sparkling, as he raised Jack up bodily over his head. "Allah is good. You shall perish. Go—go to your death!"

And so saying he hurled Jack down toward the enraged panther.

CHAPTER III.

BLOWN OUT TO SEA.

At the same moment that the old Arab hurled Jack down toward the panther, the beast sprang up at the struggling pair.

And simultaneously with the rascally act of Abdul Hassan

there pealed out two reports—coming from the rifles of Jack's father and the English consul.

The boy's body came in violent contact with that of the panther, and both struck the earth within a few yards of each other, while the sherif urged the camel away which he bestrode to make his escape.

The rest of the band had stolen off as rapidly as possible in all directions, and as no one but the two consuls knew yet what was being done to Jack, they did not interfere with the Bedouins.

The result was that they all got together a short distance away, and hurried off across the desert as fast as they could go on the camels to escape punishment for their misdeeds, before the white men discovered what they had been doing and gave them pursuit.

The shots fired at the panther hit a vital spot, but did not kill the beast at once, and after the first paroxysm of pain it arose, and seeing Jack lying close by, it darted toward him.

"Jack!" frantically shouted his father, forgetting the Arab in his sudden anxiety about the boy, "get up! Run quick, or you will be torn to pieces! Do you hear me?"

The youth scrambled to his feet, and was about to get out of the dangerous position he was in when he received a blow from the paw of the panther on the shoulder that tore his coat-sleeve and knocked him over backward on the ground.

Before he could arise to his feet the huge beast leaped again with wonderful agility, and landed directly over his body.

He felt its hot breath puffing in his face, saw its glaring eyes and open, red mouth close to his skin, and shivered as the long fangs were bared. A thunderous roar burst from its mouth, rolling in an echoing wave over the sands of the plain, upon which the rising sun was just shedding its burning rays over the mountain tops in the distance, and causing the flying Arabs to look back and see what was passing.

The boy's life was in dreadful danger, and the two consuls shivered with horror as they beheld his situation.

They raised their rifles again to their shoulders in a vague hope of warding off the danger, and then fired again at the panther.

A howl of pain pealed from the mouth of the beast. It sprang into the air, and as Jack jumped to his feet, he saw the animal fall over on the sand a dozen feet away, and stiffen out in the throes of death.

"Thank God for that!" involuntarily burst from the boy's lips as he gazed at the carcass of the panther, and shuddered from head to foot.

"He is safe!" shouted Mr. Woods joyfully.

And thereupon he ran up to his son and shook him by the hand in a fervent passion of extreme gratitude, the English consul doing likewise, and asking at the same time what the Arabs were doing to him.

When Jack told them their anger knew no bounds.

"Let us pursue the wretches!" exclaimed Mr. Woods, furiously. "We can make prisoners of them, bring them to Cairo in the yacht, and turn them over to the Viceroy of Egypt for punishment."

"With all my heart!" acquiesced the British consul general.

"Where is the yacht?" asked Mr. Woods.

"We just came here to an anchorage to get water, as you directed."

"I see that there is a reservoir here. Go on with filling the casks, and we will try to avenge the dastardly attempt that the Arabs made to take your life on account of the malice they owed me. I must uphold the country I represent, Jack. We will soon return."

The boy was perfectly agreeable to this plan, and his father

and the other consul walked over to the rest of the party and told them what had happened, and what was wanted of them.

All hands were not only willing, but anxious, to go after the Arabs and wreak a summary retribution upon them.

None of the party had mounts of any kind, but the camels could not journey very fast, and their plan of action was soon made, every one being sanguine of soon overtaking the horde of rascals.

They set off, and Jack returned to the shore to see what had become of the negro and the Chinaman, whom he had left to guard the boat down by the surf.

Sam and Tau Kwong were safely on board the Orient at the time, and to repel any possible boarders they brought out of the cabin every firearm on board the yacht and arranged it for use on the deck.

Jack saw them, and signaled them to come ashore for him.

This order was obeyed, and in the meantime Bob Bowline came back.

He was on foot, though, and presented the appearance of a person who had met with rough usage at the hands of his horse.

He was put in possession of all the foregoing facts, and in return told the boy that the Arab's horse had thrown him from the saddle, leaving him half stunned on the plain, near the seashore.

He had seen the Arabs pursued by someone whom he did not recognize, and being anxious about the yacht, he had come back to see if all was well in that quarter.

The old sailor was delighted at the boy's escape, and to hear that there was a chance to get even with the Arabians.

When the skiff reached the shore, Sam and the cook were told what had transpired, and were sent back to the Orient for the water-casks.

Within an hour the casks were all filled with fresh, pure water, and transferred back to the vessel again.

No signs were to be seen of the Arabs or their pursuers, as they had vanished in the distance, so all hands went on board the yacht.

She was a beautiful vessel, painted black, and rigged as much for strength as for speed, carrying an extensive sail-area, and was provisioned and accoutered for two months more, and any service.

Her length was one hundred feet, her beam thirty feet, and her build after the invariable cutter model of most English boats of her kind; they, though, it may be incidentally mentioned here, are not well adapted to navigating the waters of the Red Sea, as in places it is very shoal for vessels of heavy tonnage or deep draught.

All the woodwork was holystoned, and all the brasswork was neatly polished to the extreme of brightness.

Not a rope was not coiled and in its place, and after the firearms were restored to their racks in the cabin, the Orient was as trim and neat a pleasure craft as ever was afloat in any water.

"Dar's one fing dat yo' doan' know nuffin' 'bout, Massa Jack," said Sam, in serious tones, after the boy arrived on the boat, "an' dat am 'bout de anchor-cable. I'se done jest kitched a flaw in it, sah!"

"Why, what ails the cable, Sam?" asked the boy.

"One ob de links in de chain am broke, sah."

"Will she stand the present strain on it?"

"Yes, sah; reckon she will."

"Well, as it is not likely that we will drop anchor again until we reach some port on our return homeward, there is no need of hauling it up until the party return from their pursuit of the Arabs. We can then weigh anchor, repair it, and it will be ready for use when it is needed again. Besides, they ought to come back soon."

Bob had gone to the port side of the boat, and was looking off to the northward, shading his eyes with his hand.

"What are you gazing at so earnestly, Bob?" asked Jack.

He walked over to the sailor's side as he spoke, and Bob replied:

"Somehow, Mr. Woods, I don't kinder like ther looks o' yonder black leetle cloud as we seen a-comin' up over thar to north'ard."

"It seems to be a storm-cloud, don't it?"

"Ay, ay, sir, an' a-growin', too, every minute."

"Sure enough; and it is coming this way."

"Mr. Woods, afore ther fall o' night thar's a-goin' ter be a big blow in these parts, yer kin depend."

"I hope the storm won't come up until after father and the rest get back on board the yacht, Bob," said Jack, uneasily.

The boy saw the cloud which they had before observed as a mere speck had grown to giant proportions, and was rapidly sweeping through the sky, obscuring it and coming toward the Arabian Sea.

"Hello, there, you, Sam!" he shouted to the darky, who was just on the point of diving down below to finish the game of draw-poker he had been playing with Tau Kwong, when interrupted by the Arabs. "Go into the cabin, get a glass, and go up to the cross-trees, and keep a lookout for the return of the gentlemen who went after the Bedouins."

Sam pulled a wry face, as he was disappointed by this order.

So, banishing Tau Kwong and the cards from his mind, he did as he was directed, and soon was mounted up in the rigging, while the little Chinaman began to cook the breakfast, in the tiny galley below decks.

Jack could not take his glance off that ominous black cloud.

It kept gradually getting bigger and bigger, until at last it had overspread all of the northern sky, and began to hide the sun's rays.

"There is something strange about that cloud, Bob," said the youth, "and I don't half like the way in which it is hurrying toward us. Storms do not generally travel as fast as that one is coming along."

"I didn't want ter say nuthin' afore, Mr. Woods," said Bob, gravely, "but I 'spicion as that ere is nuthin' but a monsoon a-comin' t'wards us, an' if so be ther case, thar's a-goin' ter be ther deuce ter pay soon."

"How are all the sails?" quickly asked the youth.

"Everythin's taut an' trim, sir, alow an' aloft."

"Then we have nothing to fear. Yet—stay——"

"What is it, sir?"

"Sam said that the anchor cable was broken."

"Better hev a look at it, sir, an' if it ain't secure it'll be best ter heave ower one o' them bowers, fer safety's sake."

"Ahoy, down berlow dar!" yelled Sam at this juncture.

"What is the matter?" called Jack.

"Turrible storm a-comin' ober heah, sah, from de norf'ard."

"Any signs of my father and the rest?"

"Nary a sign, sah."

"Then come down on deck, and help to heave the bower anchor."

Sam was quick to obey this order, as he did not like the duty Jack had imposed on him; and, hurrying down the shrouds, he soon reached the deck, Bob having in the meantime called Tau Kwong up from below.

If the storm approaching was a monsoon, as they suspected, they had every cause for apprehension, for in April the northeast monsoon changes into the southwest, in October the southwest into the northeast. The breaking up of the monsoon are accompanied by variable winds, intervals of calm, furious tempests and hurricanes.

By the time Sam reached the deck the wind was moaning in force, so that within a few minutes afterwards it not only was shrieking itself into a gale, but rain began to fall, and the dark clouds had overswept the entire sky, making everything as black as midnight.

So swift and sudden had the storm swept up that they hardly had time to move across the deck, when it was upon them.

The bellowing of the wind grew in volume momentarily, whistling through the ropes and cordage with a wild and angry sound, and nearly swept the four off the deck of the yacht into the sea.

Jack was fairly stunned at the frightful rapidity of the tempest's coming, but without losing his wits he seized an axe from a bracket, and, running up forward at the risk of being carried away by the wild wind, he reached the bower anchor, and aimed a blow at the lashings that held it apeak of the cathead.

There was no time to loosen the bindings with his hands, and the blow he dealt the lashings might have answered all purposes had not the shock of a gale of wind just then thrown the yacht over on her beam-ends and sent the water boiling over her decks on the port side.

Jack lost his balance, slipped, fell over, and the blade of the axe struck not only the lashings that held the anchor, but also cut through the hemp cable that held it by the ring-bolt.

Down into the waves splashed the anchor, and it sunk—lost!

They now had no other reliance but the anchor that was out; but as Sam reported that the link of a part was broken they did not know whether it would hold or not against the furious blast.

Frightened at the danger all around them the negro and the Chinaman crept down into the forecabin.

Bob remained on deck with the boy, and seeing what he was doing he made his way to Jack's side by going along the bulwarks.

"Is the bower all right, sir?" he shouted to make himself heard.

"I just lost it overboard by an accident!" cried Jack, despairingly.

"Gee whiz! may ther good Lord help us, then!"

"You go aft, Bob, and if the cable don't hold you can be ready with the tiller to keep her off the shore with the wind."

This was a good plan, and the sailor started to do so when there sounded a report like the discharge of a gun, the yacht spun around, buried her bowsprit in the boiling waves, and then rolled over until her decks were submerged in the foamy waters.

"The cable has parted!" shrieked Jack, in horrified tones.

The next instant the vessel righted, and was driven away before the gale, half buried in the now raging waters, intense darkness all around, mist sweeping like a veil about her, and the full fury of the monsoon bursted, and driving her away from the shore out to sea.

Bob had gone to the helm, and held the yacht before the tempest, but as Jack reached his side the boy saw that he had let go the wheel.

"What is the matter, Bob?" screamed Jack, in amazement.

"One o' ther rudder lines is broke, I can't manage ther boat, an' we are bein' blown out to sea!" groaned the old sailor.

CHAPTER IV.

SAINT ELMO'S FIRE.

What Bob Bowline shouted to Jack Woods was literally true.

The furious raging of the sea had dashed the rudder to and fro before Bob could reach the wheel, snapped one of the rudder lines in two, and the Orient was now being driven

through the waves at the mercy of the monsoon—tempest. Sometimes broadside, then bow foremost!

The sky and sea were as black as ink, not a light was burning on board the cutter, and up through the companionway of the forecabin came groans of affright from Sam and Tau Kwong.

The monsoon was blowing from the northeast, and was driving the yacht out into the Arabian Gulf, with the utmost velocity.

In a word, they were literally blown out to sea.

It was impossible to help themselves, either.

In the midst of his peril, the young American could not help wondering what the English consul would imagine, when the party came back to the oasis and he found his boat gone.

There was no use trying to carry on a conversation, so all they could do was to hold on to the bulwarks, in order to prevent themselves from being blown overboard by the wind, or washed over by the waves that were sweeping up and making breaches over the yacht every moment on both sides. Neither Jack nor Bob expected to survive their misfortune.

The storm coming from the northeast, and the direction in which the yacht was going necessarily was to the southwest. If they cleared the Gulf of Aden in safety there was every fear to be entertained of striking upon the Cape of Guardafui, or Socrata Island, to the eastward of the cape.

Barring these accidents, they must be inevitably blown out into the Indian Ocean and be subjected to the danger of striking on any of the smaller islands athwart their course.

Hour after hour of intense anxiety passed by, the darkness seeming to intensify every moment, the storm growing in fury, and the yacht threatening to go to pieces with every mighty wave that breached over her decks, drenching the boy and the old sailor to the skin.

About midnight a strange event transpired.

The wind was hauling from the northeast to the northwest and kicking up an ugly sea, the storm seeming to be centering directly over the Orient, when there came a deafening roar of thunder.

At the same instant a tremendous explosion seemed to burst out right over the yacht, sounding like the discharge of a thousand guns.

The waves were swept up in a great, flying mass, fairly flinging the boat up into the air far above the sea.

A vivid flash of forked lightning whizzed through the murky sky, and struck the rigging, over the heads of Jack and Bob.

A huge ball of fire came rushing down the topmast stay, and when it reached a line with the masthead it exploded. Lurid streaks of flame darted in every direction, and then fell down into the sea, like a constellation of brilliant stars.

Every rope in the rigging shone like so many bars of silver, and the sea for many miles around was illuminated as if by day. The dazzling light was something sublime, but very terrifying. The dazzling light was only momentary, however, and the next instant darkness, profound and fearful, settled down again.

"Bob!" shouted the startled boy.

"Gee whiz! May ther A'mighty save us, Mr. Woods!"

"What was that, Bob?"

"Saint Elmo's fire, my lad!"

The shock from the bolt had stunned them partially.

Before the boy could say another word, there came another terrible flash of lightning, followed by an explosion much louder, more glaring, and doubly as shocking as the first. Down from the top rigging came a lurid stream of fire, which seemed to strike the old sailor on the head.

He uttered a wild cry, flung up his arms and fell to the deck as if stricken dead by the fiery bolt.

Jack saw what had occurred by the ensuing light that lit up the sea, and a thrill of intense horror pervaded him.

"Bob, Bob!" he shouted, and he staggered over to the prostrate man's side, knelt down and took one of his hands in his own. Half-stunned himself by the frightful shock the poor fellow by a strong effort of self-will kept himself from giving way to the faint feeling that was overpowering him and peered into Bob's face. The old sailor was white, stiff and cold.

"He is dead!" frantically burst from Jack's pale lips.

It seemed so. Not a movement did he make, nor did he utter a word. Despite the rolling and tossing of the vessel Jack seized his old messmate and dragged him across the deck toward the companionway.

"I'll try to get him down in the cabin," he muttered.

It was a hard task, though, as the sailor was a dead weight.

He managed it after a while, however, and by the extra exercise of a little muscle he got Bob into a bunk.

By the use of a little brandy he succeeded in reviving him.

The sailor was in a wretched condition, though.

"Jack," groaned he, in agonizing tones, "I feel's if ther hull o' my ole body wuz paralyzed by that shock!"

"Oh, don't say that, Bob!" exclaimed the youth.

"Oh, we're all bound fer Davy Jones' locker, anyway, sir."

"We may weather the gale, old fellow."

"Tain't no use in abearin' ourselves up wi' no false idees, sir, an' ther bes' thing as we kin do is ter say our prayers! I've be'n in some pretty hard blows in my day, but never hev I ever seen anythink ter ekal this storm—never, never!"

"Cheer up, Bob; we'll come out all right in the end."

The darky approached at that juncture, and telling him to look out for Bob, the youth went up on deck again.

He carried a line in his hand, which he rove from the companionway to the mast, as a life-line, to which he could cling while crossing the deck, and save himself from being swept overboard.

The wind had hauled around to the northwest by the time he got back to the deck, and the little vessel was rolling and scudding along toward the southeast at a rate of speed which she could not have equaled under a full pressure of canvas in a stiff gale, in clear weather.

There sounded a low, dull humming off to the starboard side which seemed to grow in volume every moment, and a shade of pallor overspread the boy's face as he heard it.

"There can be no mistake about that noise," he muttered.

"It is surf breaking upon the shore of the African coast, probably near Somauli."

The dull rumbling sound kept increasing.

Within half an hour he could hear it roaring above the noise of the storm, and only at a short distance away, too!

"We may go ashore," he thought.

His expectation was not realized, however. The current of water was not as strong as the wind, and the yacht veered away from that dangerous locality after a few minutes.

Jack was standing near the mast at the time, and started to go back toward the cabin, clutching on the life-line with all his strength. But half of the distance had been traversed when he was startled by hearing an ominous snapping sound, and the plunging vessel giving a sudden lurch he was thrown from his feet to the deck. At the same juncture the line broke! Over careened the yacht, and as a cry of alarm burst from his lips he was flung over into the sea!

He still clutched the line, and his grasp upon it tightened.

The waves buffeted his body about like a cork, at one moment he was submerged, and the next he was struggling on top of the water.

Swept at one instant out to the length of the rope, then

whirled from one side to the other, now tossed close to the vessel, then carried away from it again, Jack was in a sorry plight.

Repeated efforts to gain the yacht began to exhaust him, and feeling that his strength was deserting him he began to despair. Weaker and weaker grew the boy, and at last he had given up all hope, and resigned himself to die without any further struggling.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE GRASSY SEA.

Jack's senses were fast leaving him, when he felt a rope hauled taut about his arm, a huge, bellowing wave swept him close to the yacht again, and the line was rapidly hauled in. There came a flash of dazzling lightning, and he saw that Sam and Tau Kwong were on the deck, and were pulling him in toward the vessel.

This welcome sight filled him with renewed courage.

"Sam!" he shouted, faintly, "help me—quick!"

"Hold on, dar!" yelled the darky, who seemed to have heard him, "an' we done got yo' out ob dat in a minit, sah!"

Within a few moments the youth was dragged upon the deck. A sigh of intense relief broke from his lips.

"Saved!" he gasped. "How did you know I was in the water?"

"Massa Bob, he done feel oneasy 'bout yo', sah," replied the negro, "an' he say to me, 'Sam, yo' go on de deck, an' yo' done help Massa Jack, so de Chinaman he come up wid me, an' we see yo' out dar.'"

"And you arrived just in time, too, for I—oh!"

"Wha' am de mattah, sah?"

Jack had fallen to the deck rather suddenly.

"I am only tired out, Sam," replied Jack faintly.

He was in a much worse state than he imagined, however.

Jack had fainted, overcome by the terrible struggle he had gone through a few moments previously, and fell back on the deck. Sam and Tau Kwong, in spite of the pitching of the vessel, managed to carry Jack across the deck, and brought him into his cabin entirely unconscious.

There they set about to restore him to his senses.

The effects of the stunning Bob received wore away, as the night passed, and by the dawn of the next day he was able to go to Jack's room, lend his assistance and advice to the negro and the Mongolian.

The vessel held together, although Heaven only knows what prevented it foundering, capsizing, or being split into fragments. The four down in the cabin had become reckless, abandoned all fear for their safety, and let the yacht drive along at her will without troubling themselves as to her course, or what became of them.

They realized that to do so was simply useless.

With the dawn of another day their position was in nowise better, the tiny craft being still sweeping through the seas at the mercy of the storm engulfing her on all sides.

As the afternoon came on, though, there was a perceptible change. The fury of the wind seemed to abate, the seas did not make breaches over the hapless vessel so frequently, and the darkness which had been enshrouding the sky and sea began to clear off gradually.

Thoroughly worn out, Sam and the cook had gone to their quarters in the forecabin, to get some much-needed rest, leaving Bob in the cabin with Jack, whom they had succeeded in restoring to his senses. But the youth was in a weak state.

"Bob," said he, "I hope you are feeling all right now, old fellow?"

"Oh, don't worrit ower me, lad," replied the old sailor, in more cheerful tones than he should have assumed had he not wished to make the youth feel less despondent. "I'm all right, sir."

"That is good news, Bob. You was badly stunned by that lightning-shock, wasn't you?"

"Werry bad," replied the sailor, gravely, as he felt how numb his limbs yet were. "But see thar, Mr. Woods, ther sky is a-clearin' off now lovely, an' afore a couple o' hours we're agoin' ter hev beautiful weather. Then we kin mend ther rudder-line, an' set sail fer ther Strait o' Bab-el Mandeb, and git out o' our trouble."

"I wonder where we are, Bob!"

"Thar's no tellin', sir, until I kin take our bearin's wi' ther sun when ther weather clears off entirely."

"Will you go up on deck, and see where we are now?"

"Ay, ay, sir, an' a look ower ther wessel won't come amiss, neither, as we may ha' sprung a leak, or lost our mast an' riggin' too."

Although hardly able to crawl up the companionway stairs, the old sailor left the cabin, and upon reaching the deck, he saw that they were floating in a wide waste of waters, no land in sight, and the wind still driving them along at fully twenty knots an hour. Bob made his way over to the wheel, and grasping the spokes, he gave them a turn both ways. Then he made a startling discovery. The other rudder-line was broken, too. The old sailor's suspicions were aroused, and he seized the line to which Jack had been clinging when he was swept into the sea.

Fastening it to the taffrail with trembling hands, and in spite of the miserable, weak condition he was in, he swung himself over the stern.

He wanted to have a look at the rudder, as he had been struck unpleasantly by the way it acted when he turned the wheel.

The vessel was plunging up and down, and he had but a very short distance to go down to see the rudder.

But one glance was sufficient. The rudder was gone!

A thrill of such horror shot through the old sailor that he nearly let go his hold on the rope. He swung himself up to the taffrail again, reached the deck, and feeling very down-hearted, he leaned up against the wheel.

"I won't tell Jack nuthin' about it yet, fer it might make ther poor lad worse, an' he's sick enough already," he said.

Then, feeling pretty bad himself, he returned to the cabin.

Bob was taken quite sick that night, and Tau Kwong was violently seasick, so that only Sam was able to get around the vessel. The negro was a faithful fellow, and did all that he could for the unfortunates during the ensuing week that passed, without the storm all clearing away, as the Orient was driven on through the trackless sea in an aimless manner, totally disabled.

At the end of the week the waters of the ocean calmed down, the sky cleared away, the sun shone out, the rolling and pitching of the vessel ceased, and Jack and Bob recovered their health.

When they were able to go about the yacht and make an examination of the tiny craft, they saw that she had shipped a large quantity of water, and was badly battered and bruised up by the storm; then Bob told them about the loss of the rudder.

This news startled and dismayed them a good deal, as they had no lumber to manufacture a new one.

Several of the planks along the garboards were started, making a bad leak, and the topmast had been blown out of the crosstrees.

Moreover, the bowsprit was gone, and the forestays were

snapped in two like so many pieces of string by the furious wind.

"Bob, it looks as if we were doomed, don't it?" grimly asked the boy, as they took note of all the casualties on the first morning they were out on deck. "We have nothing but the mainsail to carry us along now, and this vessel won't work without her jib and foresails, in a moderate breeze. What shall we do?"

"Wi'out a rudder we can't do nuthin' fer a fact," said Bob.

Bob brought the quadrant and sextant from the cabin at mid-day, and made an observation in order to get a reckoning. The result was far from cheering.

"Looker ther sea down thar," said he, pointing at the water.

"Why, I didn't notice that before. It is all covered by driftweed a little below the surface. What does that mean, Bob?"

"It means jist this, Mr. Woods—we mus' be in ther great Mozambique monsoon current in amongst the surface-drift; and ther chances is as we might stay here year in an' year out wi'out a-meetin' wi' a wessel, as hardly none o' them comes this way on account o' that weed. It is werry bad fer ther sailin' o' a ship, an' dangerous in stormy weather."

"But it strikes me there must be some islands hereabouts."

"So thar be, sir, an' bad enough they is, too."

"Why so, Bob?"

"Cause nobody but half savages live on 'em. Accordin' ter my reckonin' they must be ther Maldive Islan's."

"Is it possible we have been blown almost across the Indian Ocean with that storm, and as far south as this—probably four hundred miles?"

"Ay, sir, we are, accordin' ter my computin', right on to ther equator, or about longitude 70 degrees, latitude 5, west —"

"What! Almost close upon the Maldive Islands?"

"Gee whiz, yes, an' deuced little time as we'd a-made through this grassy sea if it wasn't fer that storm," sir," said Bob glancing around.

"Have you ever been on any of those islands, Bob?"

"Ay, sir, once a good many years ago I was wrecked thar, but that wuz afore they had any communication wi' Ceylon, to which they pays tribute."

"Ah! so they are in communication with Ceylon?"

"Gee whiz! o' course they is now, though Ceylon is four hundred miles away ter west, southwest o' thar. They ain't nuthin' but a chain o' coral islands, or atolls, extending five hundred miles long. There's about fifty thousand, an' Male, ther biggest one, is where ther native prince lives. They calls him ther Sultan o' ther Twelve Thousan' Isles. He's got about two hundred thousand people under him on all ther isles tergether, all Mohammedans, an' some is dead sot agin ther white people, like ther Malays, ther breed o' whom they hev got in 'em, I think."

"Then they are Hindoos?"

"Summat o' that sort. More like Malays or Arabs, though."

"Well, if we could only reach Male," said Jack, "it would be much better than drifting over the sea in this aimless fashion. In fact, I'd be willing to risk the ill-will of the Maldives to get a chance to reach civilization again; and as these islands are our only hope, I think we had better try to reach them."

"It kin be done," said Bob.

"In what way?"

"We'll raise ther mainsail an' le' this wind carry us along. As ther islan's are so lengthy we're boun' ter strike 'em somewheres. Besides, as we're catched in this driftweed, we've got ter hev some kinder way ter sail out o' it, Mr. Woods."

"Couldn't we rig up some sort of a rudder to steer the boat?"

"Ay, sir, by a-tearin' up ther plarkin', some'eres on ther wessel, an' a-makin' one ther bes' way we kin."

"Then let us set to work at once, Bob."

"That's a good plan, sir, as a calm might come up, an' leave us a-driftin' here, mebbe fer months."

Sam and Tau Kwong were interrupted in the midst of a stiff game of poker, down in the fore-castle, and all hands set to work to make a new rudder, so as to give the vessel steerage-way.

By the next day they had it finished, and shipped it.

It was a rude and clumsy affair, but it answered the purpose as long as the weather held good.

Fortunately there were provisions enough on board the yacht for two months, so they suffered no inconvenience on the score of eating; the Chinaman being a magnificent cook.

The breeze held good, and after the lapse of several days, during which they repaired all the damage done to the boat as best they could, they sailed out of the grassy sea, under the mainsail, and emerged into clear water, with the wind free astern.

On the second day Bob sighted land from the masthead, off to the northeast, and reported the fact to Jack, who was on deck at the time.

The boy held the tiller (as the yacht had to be steered that way, with the rudder they had extemporized), and Jack headed the Orient for the distant speck merging up on the horizon, as best he could.

Night had fallen upon the sea by the time they came in plain sight of the land, and upon a nearer approach they were startled to see three boats put out from the shore and come toward them, filled with men, whom they knew must be natives of the Maldives.

As to whether they were hostile or not, our friends did not know.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MALDIVES.

The Orient could not come to an anchorage, as the two anchors had been lost when they were blown out to sea from the coast of Arabia, and Jack did not want to bring the vessel up into the wind, to let the people in the approaching boats come on board, until he found out who they were, and what they wanted of him.

Accordingly the yacht was kept on her course, at a parallel with the shore of the island they were close upon.

The men coming toward them in the boats were evidently not white, and the boats were similar to the Friendly Islands catamarans.

To be on the safe side, Bob hurried into the cabin, and a moment later came out accompanied by the negro and the Chinaman, bearing in their arms all the rifles and ammunition they could carry. These they proceeded to load in a great hurry, and lay down along the scuppers on both sides for use, in case they were to be needed.

In the meantime the three boats had drawn nearer to the yacht, and one of them was rowed or paddled athwart the bows of the Orient, and getting around to the port side it glided in nearer to the boat, while the other two edged in closer on the starboard quarter.

"There are ten men in each boat," observed Jack, counting them.

"An' they're Maldivese, too," added Bob, eyeing them closely.

One of the boats drew closer to the yacht, and a small, copper-colored fellow, attired in an Arabian costume, arose.

clutching a spear in his hand, and called out in the Malay tongue, which Bob recognized and could speak:

"Who are you?"

Bob raised his hands to his mouth and bawled in the same tongue:

"We are white men from Arabia."

"Believers in Mohammed?"

"No; Christians."

"How came you here?"

Bob told them they had passed through the grassy sea, but the man did not believe him, and they heard him say something to the others in the longboat in a low, guttural voice.

"Golly!" interposed Sam, at this juncture. "Look out!"

Bang went a rifle in the hands of Tau Kwong at the same time.

"What is the matter?" demanded Jack, turning around in surprise.

"Dey am boardin' us from dis side, sah, while yo' talk!"

"Blamee good! Shootee whole black head off!" shouted Tau Kwong.

The Maldives on the port side dropped from the side into their boat, and paddled away, shouting and talking at a furious rate. Those on the leeward also set up a loud shouting, and paddled toward the half-wrecked yacht with all their strength.

"They mean to attack us, after all," muttered Jack.

"They ain't ther pure-blooded Maldives," said Bob, as he seized a rifle and cocked it. "I know by the way he talks as he's a half Malay. Thar's a good many o' them hereabouts, an' they is ther wust kind o' lubbers ter deal wi', Mr. Woods, take my word fer it!"

"Sam," cried Jack, assuming the leadership at once, "you and the cook can fire from that side, while Bob and I remain at this."

"An' we'd best fight 'em off, sir," said the sailor, "fer they're a werry wengeful lot o' critters, an' won't rest easy until they gits even wi' us fer ther shot as Tau Kwong gave that lubber jist now."

"Ready now!" exclaimed the boy. "They are almost up to us."

"Look out fer their arrows an' spears—they're poisoned," said Bob.

He had hardly spoken when Tau Kwong shouted:

"Down! Stoopee down! Allee shootee we blamee blad!"

Over the four bent, and the next instant a shower of arrows flew over their heads, while some were buried in the low bulwarks, behind which they had taken refuge at the Chinaman's warning cry.

"Now fire!" cried Jack.

They arose, aimed over the bulwarks, and four reports rang out.

As many cries from the natives responded, and they knew that their shots had not been wasted.

Another fusillade of arrows and spears came.

None struck our friends, however, as they were safely ensconced behind the bulwarks, the planking of which was too thick to be pierced.

A glance at the boats showed Jack that the Maldives were paddling away toward the shore again, completely discomfited by the reception they received at the hands of those on the yacht.

"An easily gained victory," said Jack, jubilantly.

"Ay, sir," replied Bob, "but if so be as we keeps near on ter this island's shores, we'll hear from 'em agin, an' mebbe ther nex' time we may not come out o' ther fight as easy as we did this."

Appreciating the wisdom of what Bob said, Jack turned the

yacht a point on the wind, and she began to edge away from the shore.

They watched the natives making tracks for the shore of the island, and realized the fact that they had fallen upon a tribe of people who would prove to be very dangerous to them, if they ventured to go ashore among them on any future occasion. The moon arose higher and higher in the clear blue sky, and illuminated the sea as if by day, lending the sparkling waves a phosphorescent glow, as the yacht glided along slowly upon her course.

Within an hour they lost all sight of the island to which the Maldives had gone, and came in sight of several smaller isles.

Believing that all danger was past, and unaware of the fact that the people with whom they had the combat were following after them at a distance augmented in numbers, paddling along the shores of the islands, in toward which the yacht had forged again, the four on the Orient partook of a good supper, which Tau Kwong prepared.

The vessel was then going to the northward.

They had come in contact with the islands south of Cardiva Channel, and were then proceeding toward the Atollari group, that swerve off in a northwestern direction.

"Well, Mr. Woods," said Bob, "as it's mighty nigh onto two bells, I'm goin' ter turn in, as I'm tired."

"And I will go with you, Bob. Here, Sam, you take the tiller, and at one o'clock I and Bob will relieve you and Tau Kwong. But mind you, my boy, I warn you to be very careful, as you know what a perilous position we are in at present. You can see the course I am keeping, a few points off the coast. Now, be sure to keep her going this way, as the coral reefs surrounding these islands are very dangerous. One would be apt to send a craft upon them unless the utmost care is exercised."

"Oh, sah, yo' know berry well at dar's nobuddy kin handle a stick better'n I kin," said Sam, rather egotistically.

"Mind you, no card-playing while on duty."

"No, sah!"

Jack and Bob dove down below, leaving the negro and the Chinaman in charge of the wretched-looking yacht, which was all they now had to depend upon for their salvation.

The moment they were alone the negro and the Chinaman sat down on the deck near the tiller, and Tau Kwong pulled a pack of cards from his pocket, and in a few moments the two were deeply engrossed in poker, utterly oblivious to all else. They both became intensely absorbed in the game, and the vessel kept drawing nearer and nearer to the shore of the islands.

The first intimation the guilty pair had of the danger they were running into was to hear a terrific grating sound as the keel scraped the top of a coral reef, then a thunderous crash as the bow struck the shore and the vessel keeled over on her beam ends.

Up they jumped, all over the deck flew the whole pack of cards, and out of the companionway rushed the startled Jack and Bob.

"What is the matter here?" demanded Jack, in wild tones.

"We'se runned aground!" yelled the frightened Sam.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Bob, pointing at the cards. "Looker that, sir."

"Miserable wretch!" exclaimed Jack, fiercely, as he pointed at the scattered pack of cards, "see what these things have brought us to! Is this the way you obey my orders? God forgive you, Sam, you have ruined us all by your infernal negligence. Do you hear—ruined us!"

The darky burst into tears, fell on his knees and cried:

"Oh, Massa Jack, I'se so sorry fo' what I'se done!"

"Your repentance comes too late."

The guilty negro arose to his feet with a shamed face, and

Tau Kwong slunk away and hid himself behind the mast, where he remained, mumbling plaintively to himself in his own language the bitterest words of reproach and contrition over his culpability.

The vessel was securely stranded on the shore of a large island, only a few feet of the high tide intervening between her and the shore.

"Ther deuce!" ejaculated Bob, who was looking at the island.

"What is the matter?" quickly asked Jack, startled at his alarmed tones and glancing around. "Has anything else bad happened, Bob?"

"Ay, sir, looker thar!" groaned the sailor, pointing up the shore.

Jack hastily glanced in the direction in which he pointed, and his blood fairly froze with horror to see a band of the Maldives running toward them.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURED.

There are at least fifty men in that crowd," said Jack, as he eyed the oncoming Maldives, "and they will give us a pretty warm handling for the shots we fired at them this evening when they tried to board us. Shall we resist them, Bob?"

The old sailor was watching their enemies distrustfully, and he turned to Jack with the remark in regretful tones:

"Best not fight 'em now, as they've got the advantage o' us. Best ter get inside ther wessel an' hold a siege."

The Maldives were close to the wreck by this time, and the four had barely time to hurry down the companionway when the natives came to a position on the shore opposite the vessel's hull.

Glancing out the door of the companionway Jack saw the Maldives pause, gather in a group, and hold an excited discussion.

Jack saw that they were very angry at him and his messmates.

"What are they up ter?" asked Bob.

"Holding a council of war to decide what they shall do to us, I suppose," replied Jack. "There are fully fifty of the rogues."

"Entirely too many fer us ter git away wi', sir."

"Look out! Here they come! Get in there!"

They dodged down into the cabin, Jack bolting the doors behind him. Going to one of the open deadlights Jack peered out. The Maldives were wading out into the water toward the yacht, all hands swarming after a man whom Jack had not the slightest trouble in recognizing as the same fellow who parleyed with them from the boat.

They were mostly all dressed somewhat like the Mohammedans of Arabia, whose religion they frantically professed.

Their implements of war were clubs, spears, and bows and arrows.

Bob, Tau Kwong, and Sam had stationed themselves at the portholes, and were interestedly watching the approach of the Maldives.

"Those fellows mean mischief, Bob," said Jack, after a careful survey of the Maldives, "and are going around to the submerged side, so that they can clamber up on the deck to get at us."

This expectation was soon realized, as they heard the men walking over their heads on the deck.

Jack ordered all the arms loaded, and when each had provided himself with a rifle and a brace of revolvers, they felt

more secure than before, in case their enemies contemplated doing them any bodily harm.

The Maldives were evidently trying to find out where the quartet had hidden themselves, as they made an effort to force open the door of the companionway, to get in at the four yachtsmen.

"Open the door!" cried a voice outside, at this juncture, which they recognized as that of the same man with whom they had been once before parleying.

"What do you want?" asked Bob, in the Malay tongue.

"We want you," was the reply.

"You had best depart in peace, or we will hurt you," advised Bob.

"Never! We are injured and angry," was the grim reply, followed by another rattling and bang against the panels of the door, and Bob hastily translated what the native said, for the enlightenment of Jack and the others.

Bang! went a tremendous thump against the door at this juncture, the splinters flew in all directions, bits of wood came buzzing into the cabin, and the door was broken to pieces.

"Now be careful!" exclaimed Jack, raising his rifle.

Just then the leader of the Maldives appeared in the broken doorway, and the besieged saw the rest of the dark-complexioned crowd pressing on behind, anxious to get into the cabin at the four sailors.

"Stand back!" shouted Bob in the Malay language, "or we will fire and kill some of you. Do you hear! Back, I say!"

"No!" cried the man angrily. "We will take you all prisoners."

Bob fired at him, and the man uttered a cry of rage and moved aside just in time to escape the flying bullet from the sailor's weapon. Then he jabbered again, and Jack asked Bob what he said.

"He orders us ter surrender in ther name o' Mohammed Moidon, the Lord o' Land an' Sea, an' sultan o' these islands, ter perwent any more trouble," said Bob, as the Maldives suddenly disappeared.

Bob then held a short parley with the Maldivian again.

What the leader said did not seem to cheer him up much. It was a gloomy outlook for the four, and as all the responsibility rested upon Jack's shoulders, the youth did not like it.

"Who is this fellow, anyway?" asked Jack restlessly.

"He calls hisself ther Prince Baba Haroun, chief o' law an' ther religion o' ther isle o' Ari, on wot we are now. Them kind of fellers is called Fandiaris; an' he says he's got ther Atolu-veri o' ther island wi' him, ter see as ther law is carried out—"

"What is that?"

"Atolu-veri? Oh, he's one o' thirteen—one on each o' these isles as collects ther revenues, is appointed by ther sultan as his agent, an' is generally ther son o' ther vizier."

"If we surrender what will be done with us?"

"He sez as he'll put us in ther han's o' ther Katibu, who is the judge and minister combined."

"What can he do to us?"

"Put us in ther han's o' ther Rarhu-veri, or headman, I s'pose."

"A fine prospect," commented Jack, in disgust.

"An' here they come agin fur their answer," said Bob.

He pointed at the broken door, and Jack saw the Maldives there again peering in at them, their black eyes snapping and sparkling with a wicked look, and their dusky faces lit up with an unfriendly expression that boded no good for the four castaways.

"Well, what will you do?" asked the Maldivian. "If you do not comply with my demands we will burn this vessel, drive you out, and my men may put you to death."

"Sooner than run the risk of such a fate," said Jack, when

Bob had translated this, "we had better give in, much as I hate to do it."

"Will I tell 'em as we gives in to 'em?" asked Bob.

"Yes. You may as well."

The old sailor did so, and they were ordered to come up from the cabin, leaving their firearms behind them.

They each kept a revolver hidden in their clothing, however, and going up to the deck they were at once surrounded by the natives. A moment later they were made prisoners.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CRUEL WHIPPING.

The Maldives brought the four prisoners to the shore, and then set to work ransacking the wrecked yacht, taking everything of value out of the hull, transferring the spoils to the shore, and when the Orient was entirely stripped of all there was in her of any value, the natives set fire to the hull, and she was burned to the water's edge.

Unluckily for the prisoners the Maldives were not truthful men. As soon as they had stripped the yacht and burned it, Bob began to question their leader, and when he finished his interrogations he wore a very glum look, as he turned to Jack and said:

"They don't belong ter ther islan' o' Male. They're nuthin' but pirates!"

"Pirates? Jingo! That is bad for us."

The boats in which the Maldives had followed the yacht to the isle were beached near by; but instead of using them, the natives left them fastened to the shore, and the whole crowd taking what they had secured from the wreck, started off with their prisoners along the shore of the coral island, toward their village.

Not a word was said to the four helpless prisoners on the way, and they busied themselves by watching all their surroundings.

The island was one of the largest of the group; there were rice fields under cultivation here and there, and they saw evidences of sweet potatoes, pomegranates, pineapples, and plantains.

It also contained some cattle, a few goats, rats, bats, small, harmless snakes, and tortoises.

It was about one mile in diameter, thickly covered by palms and a few other species of tropical trees and shrubs, and in the center was a beautiful lagoon, with a depth of from six to twelve feet, and about one hundred yards wide.

On the northern side of the circular island was a large village. Baba Haroun and his tribe lived there in security and comfort, there being at least a thousand souls of population.

The village was laid out in long, regular streets, at right angles, shaded by trees, the houses being in compounds, with high fences around, excluding the streets, and surrounded by fruit and flowers.

The houses were cottages, wooden-framed, peaked-roofed, thatched with cocoa leaves, the walls being matted with them, too.

Baba Haroun's residence was a very large stone house, inclosed by a ditch, looking much like an ancient fort of the Portuguese style, and having several wings of bamboo poles with sharp points.

The prisoners were taken to one of the small wing houses, and roughly thrown inside to meditate over their deplorable position.

The night was spent in a comfortless conversation, and when the dawn of day came at last, a negro appeared, and

seizing Jack by the arm, he bade the boy to follow him to the presence of Baba Haroun.

The Kalo led Jack into the Maldiv's house.

The interior of the house was large, and in the principal room into which Jack was led sat the Maldiv, surrounded by three or four potentates of the island, under his command.

He fixed a dark and piercing look upon the boy when he came in, and as Jack paused before him, he said in pure Portuguese:

"Can you speak the language in which I address you?"

"I can," replied the surprised youth, in the same tongue.

"Good. We can then come to a plain understanding."

"It is lucky for me that my education at home was not neglected," thought Jack, "else I would not be able to understand what he says to me now. I wonder what the beggar wants, anyhow."

"You no doubt are surprised to hear me speak in this language," said the Maldiv, "but I will explain to you that many years ago these islands were occupied by Portuguese invaders, and nearly all my people yet speak that language. Now, I want you to tell me what your history is, and how you came to be lurking on the west coast of the North Nilandu Isle in that small vessel, looking as if half wrecked."

"What do you want to know that for?" asked Jack.

"Since you are my prisoner, and perhaps will never again leave this isle alive, I will tell you," replied the Maldiv. "You know our history, through your companion, and so does the sultan of these islands. He levied on us in days gone by, and we were obliged to secrete the treasures we accumulated, as he caused this isle to be searched. The isle of North Nilandu was the one where we have buried our wealth, and we guard it most zealously. Seeing you and your companions near there in your boat we suspect that you may be emissaries of the sultan sent to discover where we hid our accumulations. Now answer me truthfully—who are you?"

Jack told him, and gave him an account of his adventures.

"We would not have fired at you at the time you attacked us off the island you mentioned had not your men made an effort to come aboard of our boat," said he in conclusion.

"Fortunately for you all none of your shots were effective in killing any of my men," replied the Maldiv, "else we would not have spared you as long as this. They were wounded though, and are craving for vengeance against you for it."

"But you brought the misfortune upon yourselves."

"I am willing to acknowledge that," replied the Maldiv. "But remember our suspicions of you, and how much we had at stake. I am not satisfied about you yet. It is an unheard of occurrence for a vessel to come across the Indian ocean through the grassy sea."

Jack shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I am not trying to force you to believe me," said he.

"To ascertain the truth," said Baba Haroun, reflectively, "I will have the others brought before me, and question them. If their stories do not tally with what you told me I will know that you have lied to me, and you shall all be beheaded at the rising of the moon!"

The Fandiari, for such the Maldiv really was (although in the Isle of Ari he was king absolute), sent the same Kalo black after the three others.

When they were brought in Bob was put through the same questions, and there was no mistaking how his story corresponded with Jack's. That seemed to satisfy the Maldiv.

"You have told me the truth," said he to the boy. "It was decided to behead you, but we have changed our minds. The four of you shall become our slaves."

"Why do you not let us depart from here?"

"Because I have told you the secret of the North Nilandu

being the hiding place of our treasures of larins, rupees, and cowry."

"So you did. What are cowries, though?"

"Small shells used for money. Eight thousand are equal to a dollar at Calcutta."

"But I won't tell anyone about it."

"Bah! I trust no one. Our secret is too great to be disclosed."

Jack told the others that they were all slaves to the Maldives.

"You shall have to work at gathering cowry," said Baba Haroun to Jack and Bob, "and the two dark people will work in the threshing machine like animals, separating the rice from the chaff. Each of you shall have a keeper provided with a whip. If you speak to each other or shirk your work he will beat you with the whip until the skin and flesh are torn from your bones, as a punishment."

"This is diabolical!" exclaimed Jack, to whom Baba Haroun spoke, but he paid no attention.

"The rats on these isles climb the cocoa-palms and eat the kernels of the cocoa-nuts, destroying them. They also spoil the rice-plants in the same manner. When you are not gathering cowry it will devolve upon you to watch the plants and kill the rodents," said Baba Haroun.

"I see that you mean to keep us busy all the time. Anything else?"

"We believers in Islam are strict disciplinarians. To provide against your future ending you will have to dig your own graves. To-morrow your toil will commence. Should you attempt to escape you will be killed."

And with this cheerless remark he said something to the Kallo, who thereupon led them away, and he then left the house after them.

Out in the yard were four trees separated from one another by a few yards, and to each tree a long piece of chain was fastened. The four were fastened to the chains by the Kallo black, who secured the loose ends around their waists.

He then severed the bonds holding their arms. Baba Haroun stood by calmly looking on. The black then brought four iron shovels from one of the houses, and handed each of the unfortunates one of them.

"Dig!" exclaimed Baba Haroun, pointing at the earth.

Jack flung his shovel upon the ground.

"My time has not come to get buried yet, and I won't do it!" he exclaimed, in angry tones. "I defy you."

The Maldiver took a long whip, which the black had just brought out from out of the Kallo's hands, and raised it over his head.

"Mark out a space six feet by two and dig your grave!" he cried.

"I tell you I won't do it!" sullenly replied Jack, folding his arms across his breast and glaring at the Fandiari.

The lash whistled through the air and descended upon Jack's back. The boy felt a sharp pain dart through him, but did not flinch. Again and again the cruel lash descended.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Bob, in alarm, as he did not understand a word of Portuguese. "Don't fight against him, sir."

"Don't you fret about me, Bob. I am going to show this pagan that I am a Yankee boy, and won't be cowed by any rascal of his stamp!"

"You have spoken, breaking the rule I made," said the Maldiver, "and I will thrash you for it, as well as for your stupid obstinacy."

He raised the whip and commenced to beat the boy again.

Jack did not wince.

"I wish you were in reach of my hands," he said, regretfully.

The Maldiver did not suspect what Jack implied by that.

He approached nearer to the boy, when Jack sprang at him, and tearing the whip from his hand, he dropped it and clutched him by the throat.

The startled Fandiari uttered a loud cry and staggered back.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE OLD LAGOON WALL.

The startled cry that pealed from the lips of Baba Haroun rang through the garden, and was echoed by the three other prisoners.

Jack had reached the limit of the chain, but held on to the man by the throat, and dragged him back within the length of the chain.

Aching from the lashing the Maldiver gave him, he was furious.

"I'll teach the villain a lesson he won't forget in a hurry!" he exclaimed, as he drew the startled man to a spot where he could have free play for his arms and hands.

Baba Haroun was fighting and struggling to get away with all the strength he possessed, but Jack was a strong fellow, and had a good grip.

"Help! help!" yelled the Maldiver in his own language.

The whip had fallen close to where the boy was struggling with his enemy, and Jack picked it up, and, holding the howling Maldiver with one hand, he began to lash him with the whip until he became exhausted.

The Kallo had gone in the house, but as his master's cries of distress rang out, he came rushing through the door, with all the Maldivers who were around Baba Haroun in the house, at his heels.

Jack paid not the slightest attention to them, however.

Fast and furious flew the whip, screaming through the air, and every cut it made upon the prostrate Maldiver's body raised a huge welt like those the Fandiari had given the boy.

The crowd saw what was happening, and uttering the wildest cries of alarm, they rushed over to the boy, and sprang upon him in a body.

The next moment the whole crowd fell upon the ground in a squirming heap, Jack underneath the whole crowd.

The old sailor tried to get near to lend his assistance to the boy, but the chain was not long enough.

Within a few moments the battle was over, for Jack had no chance against six, and they got the Fandiari upon his feet, and held the boy so that he could do no more damage to the cruel-hearted wretch.

Baba Haroun shook his clenched fist at Jack fiercely.

"Bitterly you shall repent of this!" he hissed malevolently.

"Do your worst! I defy you! as I said before," calmly said Jack.

"Unchain him after you bind him again with cords," said the Maldiver to the Kallo, "and bring him into the house. I will kill him!"

The black tied Jack's hands, and loosened the chain from his waist. There was a long-bladed knife thrust in the Kallo's sash, and as he was passing around the youth, the edge of the knife caught Jack's attention, owing to the sun shining upon the blade.

Suddenly wheeling around, Jack slid the bonds that held his wrists along the edge of the knife, severing the bonds.

The cords fell to the ground, and he struck the Kallo in the face.

It was done so quickly that the rest hardly had time to see what happened before Jack had bounded off toward the open gate of the yard.

"The prisoner is escaping!" shouted Baba Haroun, furiously. "After him! Kill the infidel dog. Do not let him escape, to disclose the secret of the North Nilandu isle. The sultan will rob us of all our treasure. A thousand larins to

the one who captures him! Call up the guard! Arouse the whole city!"

The next instant the Maldives ran out into the street after Jack, leaving Bob, Sam, and Tau Kwong in the care of the black man.

The Fandiari lived on the principal street of the village, and his house formed part of what was once an old Portuguese fort, in which were yet several old guns, mounted upon ancient carriages.

The entire village had once been encompassed by walls and bastions now fallen to decay, and half filling the vegetation-strewn ditch that surrounded the house.

The northwest side continued in repair, advantage having been taken of the encircling reefs, as a base for the foundation, to act as a protection of the lagoon, to shield the boats anchored there from the storms that swept the island.

Jack had seen the boats moored there, and made up his mind to make an effort to get over the wall, and make off in a boat, if he could. Accordingly he hurried along the base of the old gray wall, looking for a means of getting through, or scaling it. Unfortunately there was no door, and as he turned an angle of the wall he was dismayed to hear the shouts of his pursuers coming on close behind him.

He had no time to spare in reaching the lagoon now.

Reaching a tall palm tree, that grew close to the wall, he came to a pause, and began to climb up toward the top of the wall.

Just as he reached the top of the wall, his pursuers came in sight.

Baba Haroun led the whole crowd, and, coming to a pause, he pointed at Jack, and cried, in the Malay language:

"There he is. Shoot him down!"

Jack poised himself upon the wall, and keenly glanced at the crowd.

They were armed with bows and arrows and spears, and at Baba Haroun's command they raised the weapons to fire.

Jack saw his danger and shuddered.

"Fire, I tell you!" shouted Baba Haroun, excitedly.

Twang, twang, twang! came a volley of arrows.

Jack jumped at the same instant. The arrows flew over his head as he plunged down. Then his body struck the water with a splash. He disappeared beneath the surface like a shot. The calm waters of the lagoon rippled against the base of the coral reef, the boats idly floated here and there, and the sun shone down placidly, while on the other side of the old gray wall there arose a loud chorus of shouts over the disappointment the natives felt at his escape, and then all became still again.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and Jack did not appear.

It was impossible for him to live so long under the water.

Yet the surface remained unparted, and the Maldives rounded the end of the wall, and were upon the spot, in the boats, looking for Jack.

Baba Haroun pointed at a jagged edge of the reef, in the place at which Jack disappeared, and with an exultant look upon his dark face, he said to the swarthy crowd who were with him:

"There are blood stains—look! He has perished!"

It seemed as if he spoke truly, for there was every evidence to show that Jack Woods' career had come to a sudden and violent end.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE OLD FORT.

Satisfied that Jack Woods perished when he sprang from the old wall into the lagoon, as there were no signs of him to be seen, save the bloodstains on the jagged edges of the

coral reef that protruded out of the water near where he dove in, the prince or Fandiari went away.

The rest of the Maldives dispersed about the village to talk over the event, and Baba Haroun returned to the garden of his house.

Bob, Sam, and Tau Kwong were yet chained to the tree, with the Kallo black mounting guard over them with a whip in his hand.

The negro had forced them to dig the graves, and they had just finished when the Fandiari appeared upon the scene.

"May Allah protect us!" said the Maldiver, "but your wretched friend has perished by jumping into the waters of the lagoon."

Bob was startled at this piece of intelligence, as he devoutly hoped that Jack had managed to make his escape.

"If you offer to escape or utter a word your keepers shall lash you soundly for daring to disobey my orders."

"Shall I take them away now?" asked the Kallo.

"Lock them in the fortress until to-morrow."

He waved his hand toward the old Portuguese fort, a part of which constituted his own dwelling house, and walked away.

The black released them one by one, and brought them into the old fort with perfect security, as the bamboo gate with the sharp-pointed tops, in the fence surrounding the garden, was shut and locked now.

They were locked up in the gun-room, where the old pieces of ordnance lay on their ancient carriages, mentioned before.

It was a spacious apartment, pierced in several places by narrow windows that showed how thick the walls were.

The bonds were taken from their hands, giving them perfect liberty as far as their actions went, although the black told Bob that if they conversed he would enter and give them all a beating. Notwithstanding this mandate they got out of sight and ear-shot of him, and held a whispered consultation over their troubles.

"I'll jest take a turn aroun' this place, and see whar we hev foundered," said Bob.

The others assenting, the old ailor walked away, and was soon lost in the darkness, while Sam and Tau Kwong glided over to where the light of day streamed in through one of the windows, and slanted over one of the old guns upon the floor. The negro examined the gun, and believed it to be loaded. There they sat down, and having plenty light for the purpose, they opened a jack-pot and commenced to gamble, soon forgetting everything in the engrossing interest of the game they were playing.

Bob, in the meantime, had gone into the adjoining room, and found himself in a smaller apartment on the ground floor, having no windows, and seeming to contain some furniture, as he stumbled over a chair.

He had hardly regained his feet, when he became aware that there was someone else in the room besides himself.

There sounded the soft footfall of a man crossing the floor in the most stealthy manner, and Bob stopped short and listened.

At the other side of the room his keen eyes vaguely made out the crouching figure of what seemed to be a man near the wall.

The figure was so far away and the darkness was so profound that Bob could barely distinguish the outlines of the form, and at first might have imagined that it was the figure of a piece of furniture, were it not for the fact that he heard the sound of foot-falls.

"A man!" he muttered. "He don't move, neither, blast him! Who is he?"

Bob uttered a cough, and kept his glance fixed intently upon that silent and immovable form, wondering who it could be.

The lurking man began to glide across the room toward

an archway, at the extremity of the apartment, much as if he was retreating.

Bob's curiosity was aroused to fever pitch.

"I'll find out who he is, or die!" he muttered determinedly.

Just as the stranger was vanishing in the gloom the old sailor reached him, and seizing his arm, he swung the man around.

"Gee whiz! It's Jack!"

"What—Bob!"

And the stranger was really Jack.

He shook the old sailor's hand most heartily.

"But ther Fandiari tole me as yer wuz dead—jumped inter ther water."

"I sprang off the wall into the lagoon, and coming up near the face of the coral reef, a current of the water carried me through a hole in the face of the reef. At first I thought that my days were numbered, as I was carried under the reef. But upon reaching the surface I found that the interior of the reef upon which this old fort is built is partially hollow. The action of the water on the coral would be an apt agent to do this. At any rate, I found a shore, to which I swam, and getting up out of the water I rested myself, and heard the Maldives outside looking for my body."

"Ay, now, but that was a lucky escape, sir."

"It was indeed, Bob. I was in darkness, and after resting myself I arose and began to grope my way along the wall to find a means of getting out of the interior of the reef. I knew that nearly all these coral reefs are undermined by the tides, filled with hollows, and I thought nothing of coming up inside of it."

"But how did yer git in here?" asked Bob.

"You can imagine my surprise to stumble upon a roughly-hewn flight of stairs cut in the coral. They were probably made years ago when the Portuguese were lords of these islands. They led me up into this old fort, opening into a small apartment adjoining the room next to this. It was more like a closet than anything else, and I was obliged to force open an old, rusty iron door studded with big brass nail-heads. I came in here a few moments ago to explore my surroundings, when I was startled to hear you enter the room."

Bob told him what had occurred during his absence.

"Don't yer think as we could all hide in that 'ere hole under ther reef, an' git away from this blasted place through ther openin' in under ther water?" he asked the youth.

"Easily. We might then get on one of the boats anchored below the base of the old wall and put out to sea."

"Good enough! An' if we could reach ther isle o' Male, an' tell ther sultan about ther pirates' treasure on North Nilandu, he'd be apt ter len' us a helpin' han' ter git away from these islan's on one o' ther tradin wessels wot goes ter Calcutta," said Bob.

The next moment Bob walked away with the youth, and after being shown the way to get out of the fort, Jack went down the stairs again, and Bob returned to the other room, to apprise his companions of what he had just discovered, and prepare them to get away.

The negro and Tau Kwong were very intent upon their game of poker when Bob got in the room again, and the Kallo was gone from the door.

Suddenly Sam accused the Chinaman of cheating, and in the height of his rage, Sam flew at him, to give him a thrashing, when the little Chinaman uttered a sharp cry, that rang through the room.

In through the door ran the Kallo, with his whip.

Without saying a word he commenced to lash the two unmercifully, and the next instant they were dancing up and down the floor, yelling with pain, and imploring for mercy, forgetting all about the cards.

Bob was disgusted, as they spoiled his plan to escape.

And to add to the misery of the situation, Jack became alarmed for the safety of his friends, by hearing the terrific uproar, and came rushing in, just in time to be seen by the Kallo. The Kallo stopped beating the two refractory prisoners, and ran from the room, shouting at the top of his voice.

"I am discovered!" exclaimed Jack, in disgust. "Here, you two fellows follow me."

Sam and Tau Kwong ran over to his side, when in through the door came a crowd of the Maldives, who were alarmed and told what was transpiring by the Kallo.

Jack's glance fell upon the old guns.

"Are these things loaded?" he asked of Bob.

"Dis one am," said Sam, pointing at the gun alongside of which he had been sitting while playing cards.

It was the one he examined.

"Then run away with Bob. I will cover your retreat."

The two hurried off after Bob, and Jack turned to the gun.

It was pointed almost directly toward the door through which the Maldives came, and lay on an ancient wooden carriage.

As the guns were only stored in the room, and not there for use, there was nothing surprising in the gun being turned in that direction so very conveniently at that time.

Jack drew out his revolver, as it will be recollected that all had retained such a weapon when they were taken prisoners on the stranded Orient, and the boy glanced at the on-coming Maldives dauntlessly enough.

Pointing the muzzle of the revolver at the touch-hole, he cried in Portuguese to Baba Haroun, who led the crowd:

"Stand where you are, or I will fire this gun at you!"

"Heed him not!" shouted the infuriated Fandiari, brandishing a sword which he carried in his hand. "Run him down!"

Jack did not understand this, as it was said in the Malay tongue. But he saw what was meant, and as they rushed at him he fired his revolver! There followed a thunderous report from the gun, a terrible flash of fire, a cloud of smoke, and the old fort fairly trembled on its foundations.

CHAPTER XI.

OFF IN THE FELUCCA.

The old gun recoiled with the concussion of the explosion, but Jack sprang back out of harm's way the moment he fired it, expecting that the ordnance would either kick or burst.

It contained nothing but powder, though, so if Jack expected to see any of the Maldives fall shot he was disappointed.

The scattering powder struck them, as they were within a few feet of the breech of the gun when it was discharged, and penetrating their skins with stinging effect, it brought them to a halt.

Loud were the cries of distress that fell from the lips of the terrified natives; many of them fell prostrate, and not a few fled.

Jack located the old sailor over by the door leading into the room through which they would have to go in order to reach the interior of the reef, and he found Sam and Tau Kwong with him.

Jack started off, finding the iron door as best he could in the darkness, and they hurried down the stairs.

The others crept after him, and Jack soon reached the water.

"Here it is," said he, coming to a pause. "We will wait here until we find out what they will do. If they don't find

the iron door we are safe in this place until we can make our escape. Now, listen: There is a stream that flows through this reef, else it would not have had force enough to carry me up in here, and I think it fills and empties the lagoon. The hole through which it flows is in the wall on this side, about three feet below the surface, and no more than six feet from the water's edge at this spot. Measure the length of your body and dive. Swim against the tide and you will be safe. I will lead the way when the time comes."

Jack's directions could not be mistaken, and they settled themselves to await the result of the Maldives' search.

Hour after hour passed, and they began to congratulate themselves that their retreat was going to escape detection, when they heard the voice of one of their enemies up at the head of the stairs talking.

The Atolu-veri (tax-collector), who found the door, raised such a noise over his discovery, that a crowd was soon collected to the spot.

The fugitives heard their excited voices, jabbering up at the top of the stairs, and saw several torches held aloft, shedding a glaring light down upon the stairs into the subterranean.

"We must go!" exclaimed Jack, "for they will soon come down to explore this place, and discover us."

Jack slipped down into the water, and dove out from shore.

As he did not come back, they concluded that he had managed all right, and Sam followed, the Chinaman being afraid to venture before him.

Then the sailor, after some difficulty, persuaded Tau Kwang to go. Instead of sinking, he began to flounder about, splashing the water, and creating such a disturbance as to arouse the attention of the Maldives, who were coming down the stairs.

"There they are!" shouted one of the natives in Malayese.

"After them—they are jumping into the water," cried the voice of Baba Haroun, and Bob saw the rascal come running down the stairs.

After him rushed the whole dark crowd, the torches some of them carried lighting up the scene with a bright glow.

Bob saw that only the promptest action could save them, and springing into the water he seized the Chinaman in his arms and dove down with him beneath the surface.

Tau Kwong struggled to get away, but Bob hung on to him grimly, and having not the slightest difficulty in finding the aperture through which the others had gone, he passed through. When he emerged into the air again he found himself close to a large boat, looking like a felucca, the large lateen sail of which was raised on the Kandou (light wood) mast. Jack and Sam were in it, and the former grasped the Chinaman and pulled him into the boat as soon as Bob appeared on the surface. The drenched sailor followed him in.

The shadows of twilight had fallen upon the lagoon, and a stiff breeze was blowing from the northwest.

A rope made of the fibers of the dumbari cocoanut tree anchored the felucca to the side of the reef, beneath the old wall upon which the fort was built, and Jack was severing it with his knife when Bob and the Chinaman appeared and entered the boat.

"Safe! Safe at last!" muttered Jack. "And now to see if we can't get away in this boat."

It was only a hundred yards across the lagoon, and the tropical moon was rising in the east like a huge ball of fire, shedding a brilliant luster over the water, and showing them a passage through the atoll isle on the opposite side, through which the felucca could easily pass out to the open sea beyond.

Jack severed the fibrous rope, and as Tau Kwong lay gasping in the bottom of the boat, Bob seized the helm, and turned the prow of the queer craft out toward the middle of the

lagoon. The breeze caught the huge leg-of-mutton sail, making the long bamboo gaff, fastened horizontally across the top of the mast, fairly bend like a hoop, as the sail filled away.

The wind was free astern; consequently the felucca bowled through the water at the top of her speed, and was only a few moments in crossing the lagoon and reaching the channel that led to the sea.

Jack had hold of the double-sheet line with which the sail was worked, and kept his glance fastened upon the village of the Maldives. He saw numbers of people thronging the streets, and beheld several of them pause and point out at the felucca.

"They see us sailing away," said the youth, "and we can expect a little trouble pretty soon, I should judge."

"We'd orter cut that other felucca adrift," said Bob, "so if the lubbers wanted ter foller us they wouldn't hev no boat."

"True; but it is too late for that now. Ha! Look there!"

"It's ther Fandiari an' ther hull crowd out o' ther reef jist come out o' ther fort, an' they is a-watchin' us like ther deuce."

"They are running down to the shore now, and will soon come around the end of the wall and see who we are," said Jack grimly.

His prediction was soon verified.

There were several small barges pulled upon the shore of the reef near where the Maldives stood, and they made a rush for them. They were pulled out to the other felucca. The Maldives got on board and made hasty preparations to give the fugitives pursuit.

Just then Jack's felucca opened up the headland and passed into the stream that wound through the island to the sea.

The channel was broad enough to admit the passage of the narrow felucca, and she glided into the stream and sped away toward the sea.

Off on all sides were many smaller islands dotting the sea; and as they emerged on the southeast side had the wind astern and could make faster progress by going straight ahead. They did not change their course, but sailed straight toward the isle lying off to the south of their course.

They reached the open sea long before the Maldives got under weigh, and were speeding along at an astonishing rate of speed.

Although unaware of the fact, upon leaving the island of Ari, and going off in a southeastern course, they were heading directly toward North Nilandu, upon which the pirates had their treasures hidden from the foraging hands of the sultan, Mohammed Moiden.

The feluccas were evenly matched as far as speed went, so the natives did not gain on them the least trifle.

The felucca fled along, and after awhile they came close to the island, and Bob pulled the tiller hard aport, sending the vessel off on the wind a single point so as to clear the land.

Unluckily for him, though, he did not know that he was too close to the reefs for safety, for the felucca struck a sunken reef, and they suddenly found themselves stranded once more, and their enemies coming after them at a rapid rate of speed.

The distance from the reef to the small island was only some two hundred yards, and as the felucca instead of being any protection to them would only hold them where they would be at the mercy of their enemies, they resolved to swim ashore.

Accordingly they abandoned the boat, and as Bob aided the little Chinaman they soon reached the shore.

The isle was densely wooded with banyan, pipal, bread-fruit,

tremendous Kandu and Kuradi-palm trees, besides having a dense undergrowth of vines and shrubbery.

The four started off along the shore of the little lagoon in the center of the island, keeping a sharp lookout for a good place in which to hide themselves from their enemies.

"That does not look like an unlikely spot," said Jack, pointing at a large heap of coral protruding from the ground near the shore, the whole huge pile being covered over with creeping plants.

He walked over to the eminence and beckoned to the others.

"Why, bless my stars," said Bob, "thar's a openin'! Looks mighty like a cave ter me, Mr. Woods. Le's go inside an' see."

There was a long rent in the roof, through which the light of day streamed down, illuminating the interior of the place, and they went in.

They were in what seemed to be a natural cavern, on the surface of the island, and believing it was as good a place as any in which to hide, they walked in a short distance further, upon what seemed to be a carpeting of palm-tree fibers.

A crackling noise beneath their feet brought them to a sudden pause, and with their fears aroused, they were about to beat a retreat, when suddenly the ground seemed to open beneath them, and they fell through a hole in the floor which the fibers had been covering.

It was a genuine man-trap. The fall was not great, however, and they all landed in a heap, considerably shaken up, but in nowise injured by their mishap.

"Gee whiz! Wot do this mean?" gasped Bob, in amazement, getting up.

"We have fallen into a trap, I am afraid," said Jack, arising.

They glanced around when all were upon their feet, and saw that they had fallen into a tunnel, at the end of which was a large cavern. In the center of the cavern burned a huge fire.

At Jack's proposition they went forward very cautiously to see who built the fire, and upon entering the cavern they saw that it was filled with many boxes and bales of cocoa fiber.

They were filled with a vast, uncovered treasure of cowry shells, coins, gold and silverware of an Indian style, and many other valuables.

"It looks as if we stumbled upon the pirates' treasure cavern," said Jack, "but as the Maldives will probably come down here, we may be caught in a trap."

"Golly!" exclaimed Sam. "Look ober dar, Massa Jack!"

"Oh, blamee blad!" groaned Tau Kwong. "Me see devil, allee samee!"

He seized Sam, and the two scrambled to their feet together.

The Chinaman's remark seemed to be justifiable, for a stranger just then emerged from a hole in the wall, holding a flaming torch in his hand, by the light of which they saw that he was a most hideous-looking object, hardly four feet high, but very broad and heavily-built.

This ugly dwarf wore a conboy petticoat like the Maldives, and looked like one of them, but a more ferociously bad face was never seen before.

"What do you want here?" demanded he, in the Malay language.

"We fell in here by accident," answered Bob.

"You will never leave here alive," said the dwarf.

Bob told the others what he said.

They felt as if the dwarf told the truth.

CHAPTER XII.

DOWN IN THE CORAL CAVE.

The dwarf was apparently the guardian of the place. He suspected that they came to rob the place.

"Well," he said, after a few moments' thought, during which he eyed the quartet with an ugly frown, "as this place belongs

to Baba Haroun, and I am its keeper, you shall none of you ever escape from here with your lives, to betray our secret."

Jack and Bob suddenly made a rush for the little runt, but seeing them coming, the stunted Maldivian turned and fled.

Entering the dark aperture from which he had emerged, he disappeared like a flash, and they ran in after him.

The place was very dark, a vaulted passage through the hard coral; but they saw the light of the dwarf's torch ahead, and by keeping it in view they were enabled to follow him.

On, on, on he sped at a wonderful rate of speed, soon showing the four adventurers what an almost interminable passage they were in. Then suddenly he vanished from their view.

With the disappearance of the torch, the passage was wrapped in intense gloom, and they hurried on, stumbling at every step.

"Hold on, boys," said Jack, who was in advance of the others as he came to a pause. "If we go on this way we may run into a trap."

The others reached his side, panting and puffing from their hard run, and Bob said in low tones:

"There don't seem ter be any end to this passage."

"Hark! what is that noise?" suddenly asked Jack.

"Golly, sah!" said Sam, "soun's jist like's if 'twar dem red niggahs ajabberin' ober dar in de darkness, suah 'nough."

In the distance ahead of them they heard the low hum of voices. There could be no mistaking the voices as being those of the Maldives, and bidding the rest to await his return, Jack crept forward in the dark passage, and suddenly came to an abrupt bend that gave him a view of the interior of a cavern.

At its extremity was a large opening in the wall, through which two small barges had been rowed, filled with men from the felucca.

Nearly all of them were armed with a torch, and the ghastly radiance diffusing itself around the cavern showed that the floor was mostly all one large sheet of water that flowed in through the opening in the wall, through which the natives had entered.

Crouching in the mouth of the passage, Jack saw the dwarf standing on the narrow strip of shore, waving his torch to the oncoming boats and chattering to their occupants like a monkey.

The two boats touched the shore, and the natives got out, crowded around the dwarf, and a tremendous uproar of talk followed.

This exclamation had scarcely left his lips when the natives came running toward the passage in a body, brandishing their torches, and looking like a veritable band of demons.

Jack turned to beat a retreat, when he stumbled and fell.

Unfortunately his foot struck against a heap of loose coral, and sent it clattering down into the cavern, attracting their attention.

The great light of those torches swept into the passage, and as the youth arose to his feet, they saw him.

Jack was no more than a dozen yards in advance of them, and as soon as he was revealed, such an uproar followed as to almost deafen him, and sent the blood coursing like fire through his veins.

"They will butcher me if I don't stop them," the boy muttered in desperate tones, as he scrambled to his feet.

Drawing out his revolver, he aimed it at the Maldives.

"Stand where you are, or I will fire at you!" shouted Jack in Portuguese, as he brought the sights to bear upon the Maldivian leader.

A shower of arrows and spears was the boy's answer.

Down he dropped upon his knees as quick as a flash, and the volley whizzed over his head, just escaping him.

Jack pulled the trigger.

A wild cry of distress from Baba Haroun followed.

A loud chorus of yells burst from the Maldives, and Jack saw them come to a pause near the entrance to the passage.

Baba Haroun fell, with hands upthrown, into the arms of his men.

He had been slightly wounded by the shot.

Jack did not lose any time in running through the passage toward his companions, who were alarmed at the discharge of the revolver.

Jack told them what had happened.

"We had best retreat back into the treasure cavern while we have time," said the youth, in conclusion, "for there is more protection to be had there than anywhere else. Follow me!"

He ran through the passage again at the top of his speed, without the least hesitation, despite the darkness, and the three others went after him, not knowing just exactly what to expect.

They had not gone very far before they became aware that the Maldives were coming after them at a rapid rate of speed.

A few moments later they left the passage.

The glaring big fire in the cavern showed every nook and corner as plainly as if the light of day was streaming in.

There were three openings in the walls—the one through which they just emerged, the one by which they first entered the cave, and another.

"Shove over several of those boxes!" exclaimed Jack, pointing at the receptacles for the treasures. "They will make good breastworks to shield us and hold the Maldives back."

They all hastened to obey this order, as there was no time to spare, and a moment later they were amply protected, crouching behind the boxes.

With a wild rush the Maldives came pouring into the cavern.

"Draw your revolvers and fire at them!" whispered Jack.

The four pistol barrels gleamed over the top of the boxes, and as the ruddy glow of the fire fell upon them, the natives caught sight of the tops of their heads and uttered a loud shout.

"Fire!" shouted Jack.

Four reports pealed out.

There came a shower of spears and arrows from the Maldives, and then a wild chorus of shouts, attesting that some of them were hit.

A moment later they all vanished in the jaws of the crevice.

"We have got the best of them for the present," said Jack, "but our victory will be short-lived, I am afraid."

"Thar's another passage ower thar," said Bob, pointing at the hole in the wall which they had not yet explored, "and we might as well git in thar an' see whar it leads ter—what do yer say?"

"As remaining here will not help us any, we may as well try it," said Jack. "But first get a brand from that fire so that we will be able to see where we are going to."

Sam ran out from behind the boxes to do so, and snatching up a burning ember, he started back with it.

They ran for the passage, and entered it.

Sam had kept a firm clutch on the fire-brand, and it served to show them that they were in a passage that seemed to run parallel with the one they were in when they pursued the dwarf.

Within a few moments they emerged into a broad place, the dimensions of which they could not see even by the light of the torch.

"Haul to!" exclaimed Bob, in startled tones. "We've run into a trap!"

"Ha! the Maldives are all around us!"

They had run into the very midst of their enemies.

The natives must have entered the passage they were in by another entrance ahead, for the light of the torch showed them that they were fairly surrounded by the Maldives.

Instantly they faced the Maldives with drawn pistols.

A terrific struggle followed, the torch was extinguished, and a babel of shouts rang through the place.

Jack found himself attacked by one of the men in the darkness, and realizing the fact that to give in might mean certain death, he fought with all the strength of despair.

The cold point of a spear grazed his cheek; he grasped it, and with one violent wrench he tore it out of the man's hand.

Two or three pistol-shots rang out above the confusion of voices, and then Jack lost all sounds from his friends.

He feared that they were overpowered by their enemies, and finding himself opposed to a man of unusual strength for a Maldiver, he had all his attention engaged at trying to overcome him.

The spear was still clutched in Jack's hand, and throwing his opponent away from him by a powerful effort, the youth lunged at him with the spear, and felt it strike the Maldiver's body.

The man gave vent to a shrill cry of distress, and Jack heard several of the others come running swiftly toward him.

He turned around, and sped back the way he had come, leaving the struggling Maldiver behind him.

After Jack had gone a short distance, he came to a pause.

Crouching behind a projecting ledge, he watched, and listened, to discover if he was followed by his enemies.

But a short time past when he saw a light flare up in the passage, and this in turn was followed by a dozen more.

The uproar created by the Maldiver subsided, and as their torches illuminated the scene Jack saw that all of his friends were lying on the floor, bound hand and foot, and irrevocably at the mercy of the Maldiver, who were now plain to be seen.

"As I suspected, they have won the fight!" muttered Jack, regretfully, "and I have done a wise thing by keeping aloof. Now I can help the three to get away from the natives, when a good chance presents itself. Ah! There is Baba Haroun! The wretch was not killed by my shot after all, and is more malignant than ever!"

By the weird glow of the natives' torches, the boy saw that the men were lifting their prisoners up on their backs, preparatory to carrying them away, and Jack stole out from behind the ledge.

Thinking that he might have a chance of getting out of the treasure-cavern, he made his way back there.

The blazing fire in the middle of the floor afforded him all the light he wanted, and he stood deliberating as to the best means to employ to get away, when he heard someone coming through one of the apertures in the wall, and hastily hid himself behind the stack of casks and boxes to see who it was.

Several minutes passed, when into the cavern glided Baba Haroun!

The Fandiari stood in the middle of the place an instant, and then to Jack's dismay he walked deliberately over to the heap of treasure.

Straight toward him came Baba Haroun, much as if he was perfectly aware of the fact that the boy was hidden behind the boxes.

Such was not the case, however, as the man had only come in to see if the treasure was perfectly safe, and discover if the boy was there.

Not having seen Jack after a careful scrutiny from the concealment of the passage, the Maldiver had thus boldly advanced.

Mistaken as Jack was, the moment he arrived close to the

loves the boy suddenly sprang out from his place of concealment, confronting him.

Baba Haroun uttered a wild yell of affright, and recoiled.

"It is his life or mine now!" thought Jack, grimly.

Finding himself attacked, the Maldiver began to fight with the utmost fury, and, locked in each other's arms, the two fell to the floor in a violent struggle, both determined to win the battle.

CHAPTER XIII.

STEALING A FELUCCA.

It did not take Jack long to assure himself that he was more than a match for the little Maldiver wretch.

He caught hold of Baba Haroun by the throat, and the Maldiver's face fairly turned purple from strangulation.

"Help, help!" shouted the Maldiver, in the Malay tongue.

He had managed to throw off Jack's hand, and a moment after the cries pealed from his lips there sounded the distant pattering of footsteps, off in the passage through which he had come, and the boy knew that his voice was heard, and help was coming for him.

It made Jack desperate.

He got upon his knees, gave the Maldiver a fling, and as Baba Haroun rolled over on the floor, the boy bounded to his feet and sped away.

He hastened toward the passage into which the four had first fallen, and jumped within the entrance just as the Maldiver chief arose.

He heard a number of the Maldivers enter the treasure-cave, and hastened on to the spot where the four had fallen through the floor of the cavern up overhead, through which the light was streaming.

Coming to a pause under the hole they made in their descent, he glanced upward, and saw that the distance was at least twenty feet to the top, and no visible means of reaching the surface.

He walked over to the wall, and felt of its surface.

"Rough and jagged!" he muttered, as a thrill shot through him. "I may be able to climb to the top if I try."

It was a hard climb in the dark, but to his joy he was able to go upward slowly but surely, and just as he reached the top he heard his enemies come into the passage in search of him.

They carried torches that illuminated the narrow passages, and at the same time threatened to expose him to the Maldivers!

At the top of the wall which the boy was climbing he encountered a mass of the palm fibers through which the four had fallen.

It was no easy matter to make a hole through this stuff, to pass his body out, and while he held himself up on a tiny ledge with one hand, and was striving to burrow a passage with the other, the natives saw him, apprising him of the fact by a great clamoring.

Undaunted by this new danger, he stealthily kept working to force his way out, and at last succeeded in making a hole large enough to admit his body through.

A shower of spears came flying toward him just as he got out of the hole, and tumbled into the cave by which they entered.

"Confound them!" he gasped. "That was a narrow escape!"

There were a number of large nuggets of coral scattered around, and Jack gathered up an armful and flung them down the opening upon the Maldivers, the cries they uttered

amply attesting that but few of them escaped the heavy and stinging particles.

He then left the cavern.

Not a sign of the natives was to be seen anywhere.

He saw their felucca hove up in the wind, close to the stranded boat he and his friends had come to the North Nilandil Isle in.

He stole in among the trees, and stealthily made his way toward the anchored felucca.

Skirting the seashore, the boy kept in the shadow of the trees, and hurried around to the eastern side of the isle.

When he came to a spot on a line with the boat he entered the water and swam out toward the felucca.

There was a narrow passage through the island to the south of where Jack was swimming, and he concluded that it was in this stream that the Maldivers rowed or paddled their barges into the lagoon.

The man who was on the boat was lying upon the little cabin, and seemed to be fast asleep, as he did not stir.

The vessel was moored a few hundred yards from the shore, and Jack soon reached her side and dragged himself up out of the water.

As the youth reached the deck he tripped over a coil of rope and fell prone upon his face, causing the man lying on the roof of the cabin to start up, uttering a smothered cry of alarm. Raising a spear he carried, he cried in Malayese:

"By the prophet! 'tis the infidel come back to us!"

Jack drew his revolver from his pocket.

"Drop that spear!" he exclaimed in Portuguese, leveling his pistol at the man. The weapon was now empty, but the native did not know this. He gave up in dismay, and Jack compelled the fellow to throw his spear overboard and hand him a piece of rope, with which he bound his hands and then ordered him to go into the cabin.

Jack glanced over at the stranded felucca, and saw that the tide had not yet risen high enough to lift it off the coral reef. Then he turned his glance toward the lagoon.

Over the water the two boats were coming, filled with the natives. They had their prisoners in their midst, and did not seem to have seen Jack standing on the deck of the felucca. Jack ran up forward, and, finding an axe lying upon the deck, he cut the anchor-rope with one strong blow, and hurried aft again.

Trimming in the huge lateen sail, and securing the sheet-rope, he seized the tiller, brought the boat about on the starboard tack, off to the northeastward, and the boat scudded away. There came a loud shout from the Maldivers, who were just then on the act of emerging from the lagoon in their boats, and saw the felucca departing without them, with Jack at the tiller. Laughing at the cries of dismay coming from the men pursuing him, Jack grasped the tiller, and trimming in the sail, he sent the boat flying through the water.

He kept the swift vessel going to the northeastward, against the wind, and his captive stood by, glancing back at the two boats, which they were fast leaving astern.

Suddenly his captive, who had in some manner got his hands free, sprang overboard and swam toward the boats.

An exclamation of rage burst from Jack's lips.

"The sly wretch! Why didn't I tie his legs, too!" he cried.

It was then too late for regrets to be of any avail, and the youth saw his prisoner swim toward the two boats without being able to stop him.

The felucca sped through the water rapidly, and when Jack considered himself safe, he fastened the tiller, and went into the small cabin in the midship section to investigate.

It was a small apartment, furnished in the most lavish and elegant manner, for the accommodation of Baba Haroun. There were divans, rugs, and arras hangings of the most

exquisite Turkish and Hindoo workmanship, the cabin having more the appearance of a luxurious room in a palace than anything else.

Upon a table in the center of the cabin laid several knives and a repeating rifle, the stock of which bore a tiny plate, upon which the name of the English consul of Cairo was engraven. It was evidently one of the rifles the Maldives stole from the yacht before they set fire to her.

It only occupied an instant to satisfy himself that the weapon contained a full charge, not one of the shells having been emptied.

Satisfied of this, Jack grasped one of the knives, hurried out on deck again with the rifle clutched in his hands, and saw that the Maldives had not only abandoned the chase, but were paddling back toward the other felucca stranded upon the sunken reef.

"They know as well as I do that she can be floated off at high tide, the boy exclaimed, "and are going back to get on board of her with their prisoners. But I will nip that plan in the bud pretty soon."

He laid down the precious knife, loosened the tiller, and brought the felucca up into the wind.

The bow turned, and a moment later she went rushing through the salty brine, retracing her course with a free wind, and bore down upon the Maldives again.

Faster and faster flew the swift boat through the water, the boy keeping her a few points off the course of his enemies, until at last he came abreast of the boats.

The Maldives fired a shower of arrows at the boy, but they did no harm, as the felucca was at such a distance from them the force of the arrows were spent before they struck the felucca or fell short into the sea.

Jack fastened the tiller and picked up the rifle.

Aiming it at the nearest boat, he fired.

The ball from the rifle struck the boat below the water line, tore a hole in the hull, and she began to fill. The utmost confusion prevailed among the natives, and Baba Haroun bounded to his feet, and shouted:

"Stop firing! Stop firing at us!"

But even while he spoke, his men kept firing their spears and arrows at the felucca; but all fell short.

The felucca, too, kept forging ahead toward the stranded boat.

"Release my friends, then!" shouted Jack.

"Never! If you fire again I will give the order to kill them."

And so saying, he turned and said something to his men.

The next instant the three prisoners were each seized by a Maldiver, and dragged to an upright position in the boats.

Each of the Maldives held a knife over the bosoms of the prisoners, in a threatening manner.

"Ha! They mean to kill them!" gasped Jack, turning pale.

"Leave us instantly!" shouted Baba Haroun, "or I will order my men to stab them to death!"

Jack stood irresolute. He did not know what to do.

"Fire at 'em!" yelled Bob, at this juncture. "We'll risk it."

He had released himself of his gag, and struggled to his feet, as he gave utterance to these words. Jack raised his rifle to comply.

"If I fire at their captors," thought Jack, "it may upset the courage of the others, as none are very brave."

So he aimed at the fellow who held Bob, and fired.

A cry of agony from the man told Jack he hit his mark, and wounded the Maldiver.

Bang! went the rifle again, just as Bob's captor fell.

Another cry pealed out in the same boat from Sam's captor.

Tau Kwong, in the other boat, managed to release himself

of his bonds, and before Jack fired again he tried to arise from under his captor, who had him on his knees.

Striking against the frightened man, who witnessed the fate of the other two, they both fell over and capsized the boat, as their falling threw all the rest to the windward side.

The next moment the whole crowd were in the water.

The little Chinaman grasped the bottom of the boat when he came to the surface, and dragged himself upon it.

The felucca was rushing toward Bob and Sam when Jack saw Tau Kwong.

The little Chinaman could aid him a good deal to save the others, so he changed the course of the felucca to near the capsized boat before approaching the other barge.

"Look out! Knockee China allee pieces!" shouted Tau Kwong.

"I want to pick you up," Jack replied. "Stand ready to catch hold as I am passing. I can't stop her!"

The moment he drew near Tau Kwong he ran the boat in the wind and rounded up close to the capsized boat.

The little Chinaman had arisen to his feet, on the bottom of the boat, and the moment the felucca glided in arm's reach he seized the rail, and climbing on the deck, he was carried away from the spot toward the other boat.

"Now, Tau Kwong," exclaimed the boy, "as soon as we run alongside, keep that oar busy to haul Sam and Bob up out of the boat. While you are busy, I will guard you with the rifle. We will have a pretty hard tussle, too, but don't be afraid. If you can't haul Sam and Bob up, try to cut their bonds, so they can help themselves."

Leaving the tiller for only an instant, swerved the felucca a point from her course, and just as Jack arose the bow struck the boat in which Bob and Sam were held.

Then came a crash and a chorus of cries.

"We have cut them in two!" shouted Jack.

He rushed to the side and peered over.

The barge was fairly demolished and was sinking.

All the occupants of the boat were thrown in the water by the shock, and a scene of terrible confusion followed.

The felucca broached up in the wind at a single curve, and Jack caught hold of Bob just as he was sinking at the side of the felucca.

He pulled him up to the deck.

Tau Kwong was less fortunate.

He made an effort to catch hold of Sam, but missed him, and the darky sank out of sight beneath the water.

With one bound, Jack went over the side into the water.

He found himself in the midst of the natives, but they were too intent upon saving themselves to pay any attention to him.

He saw Sam's woolly head appear above the surface a short distance away after a moment, and struck out for him.

The negro was just sinking when Jack caught hold of him. Holding him by the collar, the boy trod water, drew his knife from his belt where he had thrust it, and cut the darky's bonds. Then they were hauled into the boat.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FIERY ARROW.

"Let us try to reach Male Island and teach these fellows a lesson for their rudeness by informing the sultan on them."

"Ther werry thing!" said Bob.

"Besides, there is the other felucca afloat now, and the Maldives will soon be upon her deck. Before we could reach them they will sail off. You know we can't catch them, as the other felucca goes just as fast as this one."

The old sailor pointed off to the eastward.

"Thar's ther Atoll island o' Felidu," said he. "Northward o' that lies South Male, an' jist above it is King's Island."

"Then we will bear away for it."

"Sam!" shouted Bob, turning around, "come about, lad, an' p'int her ter north-by-east fer that leetle speck yander."

"Golly, Massa Bob, dis gwine fo' ter be a reg'lar luffin' trip, 'kase de wind am dead ahead, sah. Bettah leabe me tack off an' on wid short reaches ter git dar."

"Look out for the sunken reef then," admonished Jack, "and I will go in the cabin, wring out my clothing, and send the Chinaman up in the bow on the lookout."

The almond-eyed cook was keen of sight, and Jack found him lying on the cabin floor nursing his injured face and bemoaning his fate in doleful pigeon-English.

He ordered the Mongolian up forward, and having wrung his clothing he dressed himself and went out on deck again.

"Ther Maldives is all aboard the other felucca," announced Bob, "an' wot's surprisin' ter me, they're comin' on in our wake as fast as they can."

"Oh, they don't mean fight, do they?"

"Ther good Lord only knows."

It will be recollected that when our friends fled from the Island of Ari they sailed before the wind, which was a means of motion requiring no more dexterity than to start off the sheet and keep the felucca before it.

Now, though, they were making short legs, beating up to the windward, as the darky did not know how to point up the vessel close enough in the wind's eye without tacking, in order to make the point he headed for.

The Maldives did not tack, but so nicely managed the huge lateen sail of their vessel, as to bear straight down upon Jack's course.

Of course, our friends lost distance with every leg made, and the other boat coming steadily on, soon arrived within dangerous proximity to them.

"Gee whiz! See!" suddenly exclaimed Bob, pointing at their pursuer excitedly. "Isn't that a fire they've got on their deck?"

"True, and they are gesticulating this way most wildly."

They were not much longer kept in a state of doubt of the intentions of the hostile Maldives.

Several of them ran up in the bow of the felucca, when it arrived within a certain distance of our friends, and sent a shower of burning arrows flying toward the whites.

The arrows flew like meteors through the air, and struck the huge lateen sail over Jack's head.

"Ah! They mean to set our sail on fire!" gasped the boy.

His face turned pale, and he glanced anxiously at Bob.

"Sure enough," groaned the old sailor, despondently.

The arrows pierced the sail, and it caught fire near the huge bamboo gaff, much to Jack's consternation.

"Could you climb up there and extinguish the flames, Bob?"

"Ay, now—I can climb like a monkey, my lad."

"Then for Heaven's sake go, or the sail will be consumed, and we will fall helpless victims to the wretches!"

"They'll fire their blamed arrows at me."

"No, they won't! I'll fix 'em! Go, I tell you!"

The old sailor ran to the mast and began to climb up to the top, while Jack aimed the rifle and fired at the dusky bow-men in the other felucca.

The first discharge of the weapon was enough to send the Maldives hurrying into the cabin.

Jack fired another shot at the helmsman standing aft.

He uttered a wild cry, fell prone upon the deck, and another native rushed up to him, seized the tiller, and pushed it around, putting the felucca before the wind.

She then bowled back over the course she traversed, leaving our friends astern as fast as possible.

"I thought that would drive them!" muttered Jack, as a faint smile crossed his face. "Ah, Bob is up."

The old sailor swung his active body out upon the sloping

bamboo gaff, and slid down toward the spot where the fiery arrow ignited the sail.

Daylight had come and gone, and the shadows of the second night after their escape from Ari fell upon the sea.

The old sailor was a rapid worker, and in the gathering gloom he got down to the fire, and with his cap extinguished it. Then he slid down to the deck.

"Safe!" he exclaimed. "An' no damage done, neither!"

"You are a trump, Bob! They have fled!"

"So I sees, Mr. Woods; but Lor', ther wind's a-dyin' agin!"

So it was; not a breath of air was felt afterwards.

Then, for the second time, they lay becalmed!

The other felucca was at least a league distant, and laid upon the water utterly motionless.

Even the little choppy waves subsided, and left the sea as smooth and oily as a sheet of glass.

Jack and Bob went into the cabin, and lying down on the luxuriant cushions, they soon fell fast asleep.

The negro and the Chinaman wandered around the deck talking for an hour or so, when Sam told his friend he had saved a pack of cards, and proposed a game of poker.

The two were such inveterate gamblers they could not resist the temptation, as they had absolutely nothing to do but keep watch upon the boat of their distant enemies.

So they sat down on the deck up forward, and opening a pot, the cards were dealt and a game commenced.

Their gambling was again destined to get them in trouble!

A short time after Jack turned in, one of the Maldives had skipped down in the water from the other felucca, with orders from Baba Haroun to swim to the captured felucca and kill every soul on board of her!

Failing in this, he was to unship their rudder or destroy the sail, so as to render the four helpless.

The Maldive then swam cautiously toward the felucca, and at the time the two gamblers were in the height of a fever over their game, he was swimming around them, looking for a means to get up on the deck.

All unconscious of their danger, the two played on, and presently the dark face of the treacherous Maldive came up over the side, and he crept up on the deck.

In his hand he clutched a knife, and as his black eyes swept around he saw Jack and Bob fast asleep in the cabin.

A grim look of satisfaction swept over his swarthy features, and with cat-like stealth he crept over the deck and glided into the cabin!

CHAPTER XV.

THE BIG FELUCCA.

Samuel Crabb and Tau Kwong, or "Reason's Glory," as the name signified in the Chinese language, were deeply engrossed in the game of poker, inasmuch as both had every piaster they possessed staked in one grand pot, and one or the other was on the eve of utter bankruptcy.

The turning up of the cards would decide their fortune.

But it was never destined to be. There came a sudden interruption. Jack might have scented danger in the air, or slept with the traditional "one eye open," was very evident.

For, as the Maldive bent over him with the knife raised up to stab him to the heart, the youth suddenly let fly a blow with his clenched fist that caught the native on the nose.

It was a terrible thump; it knocked the half-naked Mopla out on the deck, uttering a savage invective in his own language, and he struck a huge calabash, knocked it down on the deck, and a loud clatter ensued.

Up jumped the scared darky and Chinaman, the cards and money were scattered all over the deck, and out of the cabin rushed Jack and Bob, pouncing on the Maldive, and secured him.

Early the next morning Jack questioned the Maldiver, but gained no knowledge of who sent him aboard the boat.

At daybreak he awakened Bob, and then turned in.

The sun was high in the heavens when Jack awoke, and found that the felucca was still becalmed.

A ripple of wind off to the south had carried the other felucca away behind Mulaku Island, into the Kadu Huvadu channel, where it was lost to their sight.

The wind was coming toward them from the northwest, he saw by the ruffled water, and Sam sat up forward, fishing.

Within the cabin Tau Kwong had a fire going in an iron pot, and having discovered some edibles in a locker, within half an hour the four had some good black coffee, and fish, fruit and bread-fruit upon which to regale themselves.

All were very sharp set, too, after their long fast, and did ample justice to the food, the remnants of which was given to the captive Maldiver by Sam.

By the time they finished the wind reached them, and the swift felucca was wafted along, with hardly a ripple at her long, sharp prow, toward King's Island.

The four counted high upon gaining aid from the Sultan Mohammed Moiden, but what was their dismay when, upon nearing the South Male island, to see a tremendous felucca slide out from behind it, and bear down upon them.

"More of the Maldives," groaned Jack, in disgust. "She is swarming with the rascals, all of them are armed, and, by jingo, she is heading straight toward us!"

The felucca was about two miles away, and was at least twice the size of the one our friends were on.

When she drew nearer they saw that she was gayly decorated with colored cloths and banners.

There could be no mistaking the fact that she was heading for them, and the four castaways glanced at each other with anxious-looking faces.

"Where is the rifle, Bob?" asked Jack. "It is all we have to repel them, and I fear it will not do much good."

"Gee whiz! I'm hanged if I know where it be."

They searched for the missing firearm, but it was nowhere to be found, Sam having accidentally moved it so that it had fallen behind a seat in the cabin.

The loss of the rifle filled them with despair, and as the other felucca hove up close to them, and they had no other arms but knives to repel the Maldives, they were prepared to give in and expect nothing but a speedy death.

Fight they certainly would, with their fists, but the bristling spears, clubs, and arrows of the newcomers warned them that such a battle would be very unequal and could only end in their defeat.

The big felucca ran alongside, and in a twinkling the whole horde of Maldives swarmed over on the decks, chattering and shouting in their queer language.

The four were surrounded in an instant.

Then the fight began.

The four were desperate over their situation, and, rushing into the midst of the newcomers, the whole party soon became a vast, struggling, shouting and furious heap of humanity, in the midst of which the Christians could not be distinguished from the infidels.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAKING A GOOD BARGAIN.

As the Maldives fell upon the four castaways some of the natives lashed the big felucca to the one our friends were on.

Bitterly Jack regretted the mysterious disappearance of the rifle, which had fallen behind the seat in the cabin.

The captive Maldiver, tied to the ring-bolt, did not seem to be delighted at the appearance of the others upon the scene.

Indeed, he looked rather frightened than otherwise.

Baba Haroun's felucca made a complete circuit of Mulaku Island and came out in Kuda Huvadu Channel again a few minutes after the fray began.

The mid-day sun was shining down scorchingly, and the gentle breeze which arose held the prows of the vessels up.

So fiercely did Jack and his friends fight the Maldives were driven back in dismay, and the four rushed aft and gathered around the captive Mopla.

Then the dusky band separated, and a short man, attired in the most magnificent clothing, stepped to the front.

He viewed the four adventurers in silence an instant, and, holding up a jeweled hand, he said in the purest Portuguese:

"There is some mistake here. You are white men."

"We are Americans," said Jack, in the same language, "and if once we can apprise the sultan of Male of the way you have treated us he will take summary vengeance upon you. I warn you to leave us in peace now, or——"

"My friend," interrupted the other, "I am Mohammed Moiden, the sultan of these islands, myself."

Had a bomb burst in their midst the youth could not have been more amazed, and he rapidly translated what he learned.

The Maldiver chief was, to all appearances, a person of wealth, judging by his magnificent clothing, and his followers seemed to treat him with great homage and respect. Bob was not long in deciding.

"Gee whizz!" said he. "Thar can't be no mistake."

"Wait, then," said Jack, "and I will speak to him, and after some questioning I ought to be able to form a better idea than we now have of his rank."

The rest of the dusky band came crowding toward the four adventurers, but their leader checked them with a few rapid words, and they drew back again.

Jack then advanced toward the chief and asked:

"You say you are the Lord of the Land and Sea?"

"I am Mohammed Moiden, the Sultan of the Maldives," replied the native, in Portuguese. "And who are you?"

"Castaways upon your shores, and victims of Baba Haroun."

The sultan frowned at mention of Mopla's name.

"How came you here—on this felucca?" he asked.

Jack pointed at the distant vessel and replied:

"On that felucca is Baba Haroun and some of his men. We stole this vessel from them in order to escape to the Island of Male to crave your protection from him."

"He is a pirate!"

"Yes, and a cruel wretch, too!"

"Give me an account of yourself in detail."

Thereupon Jack explained their adventures to the other.

In conclusion he said:

"If you are really Mohammed Moiden we want your aid."

"You have undergone a peculiar fate," said the sultan, "and I will help you. Baba Haroun is my mortal foe. It will afford me infinite pleasure to make a prisoner of him and have the rascal beheaded. His people are not so bad, but he invites them with wicked ideas of rebellion against me."

"We will aid you to capture him with joy," said Jack.

"Then I will know your story is a true one. But you made mention of having found the secret hiding-place of his treasure. I want to know where it is concealed. He has stolen most of it from my people's vessels, plundered their houses on the different isles, and has even gone so far as to stir up war for me by robbing passing vessels of the Laccadive Islands to the northward."

"On condition that you will aid us to get back to Arabia or Africa," said Jack, "I will show you where the treasure is."

"By the beard of the prophet, which is our most solemn vow," said Mohammed Moiden, "I will keep faith with you!"

Jack knew that the man was sincere, else he would not take the vow, so he replied at once:

"Then I will tell you. It is hidden in a cavern on the North Nilandu Island. I will show you whereabouts when we get there. It is a bargain. I will tell my friends about it."

The Maldiver nodded, spoke to his followers, who returned to the felucca, with the exception of one man, who seemed to be a dignitary of the sultan's, and Jack turned to his companions.

"We are safe enough now," said he, as he told them all that was said, "and all we need do now is to aid the sultan to capture the pirate, and we will be sent home."

The three were delighted beyond measure upon hearing this, and, for the first time since they were blown out to sea, they enjoyed a sensation of genuine hope and cheer.

The sultan pointed at Jack's prisoner just then and said:

"So this is the man that tried to kill you, is he? You can depend upon his punishment for his treachery!"

The bound Maldiver began to plead for mercy, for he understood Portuguese, it must be remembered.

He swore that he was forced to do as he had done, in order to save his life, and at last aroused the Sultan's pity.

"He said he was from your island," said Jack.

"This man," said Mohammed Moiden, pointing at his companion, is your prisoner's father."

"Then he is your grand vizier?"

"He is, the young man is the atolu-veri, or revenue collector."

"What will you do to him for his treachery?"

"I have made up my mind to spare his life, for his father's sake, if he proves his loyalty for me, by giving information of the Fandiari, which I can turn to my advantage in capturing the treacherous fellow," replied the sultan.

"A very wise plan," concurred Jack. "Will he do so?"

"Willingly—to save his life."

"Then question him, and we will commence operations."

The sultan ordered the prisoner to be liberated, and when the revenue collector was free, Mohammed Moiden at once began to interrogate him in the Malay language.

The result seemed to be entirely satisfactory, and the young man was sent on board the other felucca, with his father.

The Mopla's felucca had been standing away to the southward, and it was decided to pursue him, the sultan returned to his own vessel, the mooring ropes were cast off, and sail was made after the Fandiari's boat.

"I think that Baba Haroun's race is run at last," said Jack, as he handled the tiller, and steered the felucca after the sultan's boat, "for if Mohammed Moiden once gets his clutches on the rascal his life will pay the forfeit!"

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO SPEARS IN THE DARK.

The slight breeze, which sprung up, gradually freshened as the afternoon came on, and the sun began its westward decline.

The sultan's felucca being a larger and swifter boat than the one Jack was sailing, soon forged ahead, and began to gradually overhaul the vessel sailed by the Fandiari.

Baba Haroun's boat had passed the isle of Kolumadulu on the other side of the Ruda Huvadu channel, and was pointing to the southeast, to pass Vel Maaduch Islet, in order to get to the eastern side of the island of Hoddumati.

South of that island laid the Half Degree channel—that is, the best navigable passage, one half a degree above the equator, by which he could, if not overtaken, work his way among the little islands of Fua Mulaku and Addu, where he would have no trouble to escape his pursuers.

The sultan, though, saw what his object was.

There is also a channel on the Equatorial line, and by heading direct for it, a detour could be saved, such as the Fandiari was making, in order to retain a free wind.

Jack's boat was humming along far astern of the others, and when the Fandiari saw that the sultan divined his game, he suddenly tacked off to the westward, beat up to the northern course again, reaching for the open sea west of Kolumadulu, to thwart Mohammed Moiden.

"He prefers an encounter with us, before the sultan," laughed Jack, "and we'll give him first chance, as we will be on a line with him before his king."

He changed the direction of his boat, accordingly, to run down on the course his enemy had just taken.

"He's a tricky lubber," said Bob, warningly. "Look out as he don't run us on another reef, Mr. Woods."

"Then you go up in the bow and keep a lookout. I see the sultan has veered off on this tack now."

Bob walked up forward and just then Sam came running out of the cabin with the missing rifle clutched in his hand.

"I've done gone an' foun' de gun, Massa Jack!" he cried.

"Ah, that is lucky! Where was it?"

"Tumbled down 'hind one ob de seats, sah. Yo' see, Tau Kwong jist turned up de three keerds wot he sabe in a game ob Monte, an' bress yo' soul, I win de pot, an'——"

"What! Gambling again! Didn't I throw that deck of cards overboard? Is it possible you have another?"

Sam looked very sheepish and muttered:

"Wha' fo' I done gib myself away so foolish?"

Then he added aloud:

"No—we ain't got a pack, sah, but only hab free cards—"

"Hand them over!" interrupted Jack.

The darky gingerly drew them out of his pocket and reluctantly gave them to Jack, who tossed them into the sea.

A groan emanating from the cabin door showed Jack that the little Chinaman had observed his action, then dodged out of sight to bemoan his loss.

"That settles all your gambling in future, I hope," said Jack. "Now lay down the rifle, call Tau Kwong out and stand ready to obey orders!"

The darky saluted and walked away.

In the meantime the slippery Fandiari succeeded in getting to the windward side of the island, and his felucca glided around the headland, going north with a little extra wind which he caught in his sail.

That brought Jack's boat in advance of the sultan's.

When they got around to the westward and beat up north, they saw Baba Haroun heading for the South and North Nilander islands.

"He is going back to the treasure caves," commented Jack. His idea was soon proved to be correct.

The extra wind caught by the Fandiari gave him a good lead, but the Sultan's boat forging ahead at the end of a few hours, Baba Haroun headed for land. It was, as Jack surmised, at the North Nilandu.

"Gee whiz!" cried Bob. "He's driven desp'rit!"

"I guess he will go ashore to fight it out, Bob."

"Ay, now; that shows as he's at his wit's end."

"And listen to the shout from the sultan's men."

The big felucca was quite close to Jack's, and a wild yell of glee burst from the copper-colored fellows' lips. The Fandiari's boat shot around to the eastern side of the island and

passed through the channel to the lagoon in the center, the two other feluccas following.

"Caged! Caged as effectually as if in a trap!" laughed Jack. "and the Fandiari will not be able to escape now!"

As Jack's boat and the other glided into the lagoon they saw the Maldives run their vessel up to the coral shore, all hastily disembark, and ran in amid the trees.

The youth hove up his craft near the one abandoned by the Maldives, until the sultan's boat approached.

"Will you follow them ashore?" shouted Jack.

"Yes," returned Mohammed Moiden. "They will fight, but we outnumber them, and we are all armed."

Both boats were moored to the shore when a shower of hastily disembark, and run in amid the trees.

A tremendous tumult of voices then arose, and the sultan's men went ashore with Jack and his friends.

A few shots from the rifle scattered the fugitives, and as the sultan's forces charged on the grove of trees most of the Maldives fled for the treasure cavern.

Those who remained became engaged in a terrible battle of clubs and spears with the king's soldiers.

A scene of massacre followed that baffles description, for the Fandiari's men were all desperate.

They knew very well that capture meant bow-stringing or beheading, so they made a wild effort to overwhelm Mohammed Moiden's men by the most stubborn fighting.

A general was needless in this style of savage warfare, so when Baba Haroun fled he was not missed.

Every Maldiver fought for himself.

Disengaging himself from the fray Jack met the sultan.

He held a sword of the scimitar style in his hand, and was badly battered and cut, white with passion, and angry at the evident disappearance of the wicked Fandiari.

"Follow me, and I will take you where I think he has hidden," cried Jack.

Jack started for the entrance of the treasure cavern, followed by the sultan, who was half crazed with fury.

When they came to the hole in the floor, through which our friends had fallen, the sultan paused.

"Look out," said Jack, "the drop is twenty feet."

"A mere nothing. Hold my sword."

"Have you a flint and steel? I'll light a torch."

"Yes—here it is! A good suggestion."

Jack took the things and the sultan dropped down into the passage beneath and fell in a heap on the floor.

When he scrambled to his feet he called to Jack to drop down his sword and torch and follow him.

The boy found a resinous branch, ignited one end after fastening some cocoa fibers to it—and let it fall.

The sultan deftly caught it.

Mohammed Moiden was impatient though to go ahead, and started off along the passage toward the treasure cavern.

Jack lowered himself over the edge of the hole to drop down. His companion had gained a distance of a dozen yards, the light of his torch shedding but little light just below Jack.

"I am coming!" shouted the boy. "Wait for me!"

He hung by his hands, his body and legs dangling down, when his voice caused the sultan to glance around.

A cry of horror pealed from Mohammed Moiden's lips, causing a thrill to pass over Jack and made him pause.

The boy glanced down below and saw a terrible sight that chilled the blood in his veins and made his nerves tingle.

Directly below him stood Baba Haroun and the dwarf.

The faint light from the torch showed their hideous faces distorted into a most diabolical look.

In their hands they each held a spear, so pointed that the

moment Jack dropped he would fall upon them, and they would pierce his body through.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

The sultan's warning cry apprised Jack of his danger in time to stop him from dropping down on the points of the spears.

As his body hung swaying in mid-air the sultan saw that he was not falling, and uttering a hoarse cry of fury on seeing his enemy, he raised his sword and rushed at Baba Haroun.

The torch in his hand flared up brightly with the draught, and as the Fandiari and the dwarf saw him rush toward them, they lowered the points of their spears, and aimed them at the infuriated man's body.

It was a wild, weird scene, and Jack found himself slipping down, as his arms became tired of holding on.

"I will fall in a moment!" he thought.

Then he felt the weight of the rifle, which he had slung across his back, bearing him down irresistibly.

The sultan paused out of reach of the spears. Then Jack fell. Down he shot toward the two men beneath, and his body struck the dwarf on the back, as the ugly little wretch bent over toward the sultan, with his spear thrust outward.

The dwarf went down, as if hit by a cannon ball, and the Fandiari darted back, uttering an alarmed ejaculation.

The wretch saw Jack fall upon the dwarf, and the white boy was just about to get up, when the Fandiari poised his spear, and sprang at him, to plunge it through the youth's unprotected body.

The sultan darted forward at the same juncture, and as the spear shot out toward Jack the gleaming sword flashed in the air, descended, and cut off the spear-end!

The blow knocked Baba Haroun's weapon out of his hand.

Up jumped Jack, and the moment the dwarf found himself free he arose and scampered away toward the cavern.

The Fandiari was in a white heat of rage.

He fondly hoped he would kill Jack, and to find his design so suddenly and unexpectedly thwarted made him wild.

The sultan rushed up to him with the sword upraised.

Baba Haroun could only retreat a short distance when he was brought to a pause by the wall at the end of the passage, where he and the dwarf had been lurking before.

Jack heard the sultan's sword hiss through the air, a sickening sound followed, and then the fall of a body.

The sultan shouted something unintelligible to Jack, and as the boy glanced over his shoulder he saw Mohammed Moiden thrust the torch in a crevice, stoop down and pick up something in his hand.

It was Baba Haroun's head.

The decapitated body lay on the floor close by.

A shudder of horror convulsed Jack.

"That is the end of him!" he muttered. "Barbaric justice truly, but he is the king and has the right to do it."

While speaking he unslung his rifle and ran after the dwarf, who sped just then into the treasure cavern.

There was still a huge fire burning in the middle of the floor, and as Jack reached the cavern, he shouted:

"Stop, or I will fire at you!"

The dwarf paused at the end of the other passage, and raising the spear which he still held, he flung it at the boy.

It came whizzing through the air, and Jack bounded aside just in time to escape his death.

The dwarf's wickedness enraged the boy, and, aiming his rifle at him, he pulled the trigger.

A flash and a loud report followed.

Then there came a cry of distress from the dwarf.

He flung up his arms, and fell over upon his face.

Jack ran over to him, but the wretch was dead.

Like master, like man; both met a deserved fate at last.

The sultan just then came in, carrying Baba Haroun's head by its long hair, his sword in his belt, and his torch held aloft in his other hand.

"Ah!" said he. "You have shot him?"

"Yes. We are both amply avenged. This is the treasure."

The sultan examined the bales, boxes, and heaps.

"A king's ransom," said he. "My men will take it away, and you shall set sail to-morrow, in an outward-bound ship for Calcutta, India, from where you might make your way back to Cairo, as I shall provide you liberally with money."

"Then let us leave here."

"How shall we get out? We cannot climb up to the hole in the roof of the passage very well."

"There is another exit through one of these passages. I will show it to you. Then we must swim to the outer air."

"Lead the way."

"But that head——"

"I must keep it."

"Such a ghastly relic——"

"My subjects must see it, to behold the manner in which I deal with the unfaithful. It will strike terror to the hearts of those who dare dream of opposing my wishes."

Jack said no more, but passed into the passage in which he and his friends once fought the Maldivian pirates.

Traversing its length, and coming to the cavern, the floor of which was a sheet of water, they emerged in.

The Maldivian sultan had fastened the head to his girdle, in order to have the use of his hands.

Passing through the aperture in the wall, and reaching the lagoon, they swam to the king's felucca.

There they learned that the Maldivian pirates were all either captured or killed, and everybody being recalled, a long consultation followed.

The prisoners were put on one of the feluccas, all the treasure was transferred from the cavern to the sultan's vessel, and with Jack, Bob, Sam and Tau Kwong on board, they put some men on the two other feluccas and made sail.

The four friends were treated with uncommon civility and attention now, showing them that the better class of Maldives were better than the sixth-grade caste of Kallo blacks.

The vessels proceeded to the Island of Ari.

There the head of Baba Haroun was stuck on a pole, and fastened to the minaret of the Islam mosque of Jami.

The prisoners were all publicly executed before the old Portuguese fort, viewed by the silent, terrified inhabitants, and Jack's prisoner was elected Fandiari in Baba Haroun's stead, as he had proved his loyalty to the sultan's satisfaction.

Then, after addressing the populace, the Lord of Land and Sea went on board the felucca with his men and our friends, and they set sail to the Eastward for King's Island.

They arrived within the lagoon that night, and were taken to the sultan's palace, where a grand feast was given in their honor for what they had done to exterminate Baba Haroun.

After being royally entertained and viewing the queer city, they were put on board of a large trading vessel, with all their property restored, which Baba Haroun and his men had stolen, a very large sum of money, and the well wishes of everyone.

That night the vessel set sail for India, and followed by cries of parting of the whole city, our friends started on their long voyage—homeward bound.

It is not our province to detail the events of their voyage to India, with its storms, calms, and fair days, the kindness of those who sailed the vessel and the happiness of all.

Let it suffice that in due course of time they safely arrived at Calcutta, and after bidding their friends on shipboard a hearty good-by they started for home.

But as all things must come to an end so did their voyaging, and four happier people never existed than they were when they finally reached the city of Cairo.

Their happiness was further increased to find that the English consul and Jack's father, the American consul, with their friends of the hunting-party, were home safe and sound.

The joy of their reunion was unbounded.

The hunters upon finding that the yacht *Orient* was gone from her anchorage, imagined that the monsoon storm had blown her out to sea.

After waiting for her return a reasonable length of time, they were finally forced to believe she and all on board were lost.

A passing vessel took them all back to Egypt.

Their amazement may be imagined when Jack told the history of their adventures.

In conclusion, although regretting the loss of his yacht, the English consul did not complain, since the castaways were saved.

From that time onward Sam, Tau Kwong and Bob Bowline were taken into Mr. Wood's service, at the consulate, at Jack's earnest appeal, and the four to this day are happy friends and inseparable companions.

When the American consul returns to his native land he will bring them back with him, and all are anxiously looking forward to the day when again they will tread the free soil of our own glorious country.

THE END.

Read "THE BOY VOLUNTEERS; or, THE BOSS FIRE COMPANY OF THE TOWN." by Ex-Fire-Chief Warden, which will be the next number (500) of "Pluck and Luck."

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

The sensational discovery has just been made that one of the most skillful young cowpunchers in the Northwest is a woman. She wore male attire, close-cropped hair, and her skin was tanned by the sun and wind till it looked like saddle leather. She had punched cows all the way from Texas to Montana without her sex being discovered. She went under the name of Jim Footner, but when her sex was accidentally discovered a few days ago while working in the Bellefourche region, she acknowledged that her real name is Hattie Wallace and that her parents formerly lived in the copper regions of Northern Michigan. After the disclosure made here the girl left, saying that she would go where she was unknown and continue her life as a cowboy, which she dearly loved.

"The queerest house in the world," said a zoologist, "is undoubtedly the famous bone cabin in Wyoming, near the Medicine Bow River. This cabin's foundations are built of fossil bones. Bones of dinosaurs—jaws of the diplodocus, teeth of the brontosaurus, knuckles of the ichthyosaurus, vertebrae of the camarasaurus, the brachiosaurus, the stegiosaurus, the ornitholestes of bird-catching dinosaur—all entered into this wonderful cabin's foundations. This hut was built by a Mexican sheep herder who had happened on the grandest extinct animal bed in the world. This was a plot about fifty yards square, wherein lay in rich profusion the bones of all the animals of the reptilian age. The place was evidently once a river bar, and the dead bodies that floated down the stream were here arrested to lie for hundreds of thousands of years till the sheep herder set about the building of the world's queerest cabin."

What is said to be the first transfer of real estate from a white man to an Indian in the history of Maine has just been completed. The sale was made to an Indian business co-partnership and plans are being made for the first manufacturing establishment in New England to be owned and operated entirely by Indians. Sebatis Shay and Newell Ranco, full-blooded Indians of the Penobscot tribe, living on the reservation on Indian Island, have associated themselves under the firm name of Shay & Ranco and purchased a lot of land in Old Town upon which they will erect at once a factory building to be supplied with electric power generated by the plant at the Old Town falls. The Indian concern will manufacture canoe paddles and cant-dog stocks, products which demand absolute fidelity in their manufacture, as a canoeist or river jack often trusts his life to the bit of seasoned maple. These articles have for years been turned out by the Indians by laborious hand work. The new concern will supplant hand by machine work to a certain extent, greatly reducing the cost of production. The firm has already employed as a stenographer and typewriter a young Indian woman, a high school

and business college graduate who can translate the Indian language into English if necessary.

A large colony of women is to be established in Refugio, Tex., under the direction of Mrs. Mary F. Haydon, of Chicago. It is stated that she has closed a deal for the purchase of a tract of five thousand acres of rich land, situated adjacent to the Gulf Coast. This land will be divided into small tracts and apportioned among the women colonists who are to live there. The details of Mrs. Haydon's plans are not known here, but according to the statements of those who were interested in the land transaction she intends to make the land the site for an ideal colony of women, who are to be in full charge of its operation. The women are to control absolutely all of the industries of the colony. They will own the property jointly, and in many respects all business of the colony will be conducted on the co-operative plan. The colonists will devote their energies principally to truck farming, fruit raising, beekeeping, dairying and poultry raising. The hard field labor of the farms will not be done by the women. Men will be employed for that purpose. Those colonists who have husbands will have the privilege of bringing such men to their new homes, but unmarried colonists will not be encouraged in the idea of taking unto themselves husbands. Men will be tolerated at the colony. That is all. They will not have a voice in its arrangement. The husbands will be permitted to sit around, like any other piece of furniture, but they will be made to know their place when it comes to the affairs of the colony. The object in locating the colony in this section is that the outdoor work may be carried on during the whole year. Vegetables of all kinds are raised in winter as well as in summer. Among the industries which are to be established and operated by the colonists are canning factories, ice factory, creamery, refrigerating plant and silk worm culture.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

The other day a young man gave a reason for not dancing the spirit of which he might be made to apply to a good many failures in life. "I should like to dance," he said, "and I should dance only the music puts me out and the girl gets in my way."

"What! A woman doesn't know the value of an oath, eh?" she exclaimed angrily. "Gracious! do you mean to say a woman's word isn't as good as a man's?" "It may be better, morally," he replied, "but it isn't as satisfying. Any man as angry as you are now would choose a stronger word than 'Gracious!'"

At a temperance meeting in one of the large English towns an old lady—an energetic worker for the temperance cause—approached a gentleman and said: "Mrs. S——, cannot I persuade you to take the pledge?" "I really don't think it's any use," replied the one addressed—"in fact, I'm always taking the pledge, but never keep it long." "I—oh, I'm sorry to hear that!" interrupted the lady. "You see," continued Mr. S——, "I'm a pawnbroker."

Mary took sundry lessons and hints from her mamma before she married; but one thing her mother tried to impress upon her was to waste nothing. "If you have a chicken," said her mother, "don't roast it—that's waste. Boil it. Then you will have boiled chicken for dinner, and next day you can utilize the water it is boiled in as chicken broth. So, you see, you get two dishes that way." Poor Mary tried to act up to such an example—she wastes nothing. The other evening Edwin was confronted by something in a soup tureen. He tasted it, and it was rather weak. "What on earth is this?" he asked. "That's egg-soup, dear." "Egg-soup! What the dickens is it made of?" "I made it, darling," she said, "from the broth I boiled the eggs in. Don't you like it, dear?"

HE THOUGHT NO DETECTIVE COULD OVERHAUL HIM

By PAUL BRADDON.

I was in the active employ of Pinkerton for many years, and I took my full share of the risks incident to detective work, but the very first case assigned me had more peril in it than any four others combined. I had done some "spotting" and "shadowing" and had helped on two or three cases, when I was sent to Milwaukee to look after an embezzler.

The case was stated in a nutshell. A Mrs. Pierce, a widow of wealth, and a woman who trusted her servants altogether too much, received one day from the East by express a package of money amounting to \$14,000. She had been in the habit of sending her butler to the bank to make deposits for her, and now and then to draw money on her written order. He had been with her for several years as a sort of man of all work in the house, and she had found him strictly honest. She gave him the money to deposit without a fear of his being tempted. He was not seen after he left the house. He did not go to the bank, and for three or four days Mrs. Pierce and others labored under the belief that he had been robbed and murdered. The hunt for his dead body was going on when I reached Milwaukee.

The name of the butler was John Lane, and he was described to me as a sandy-haired, red-faced man, weighing 160 pounds, and wearing a sandy mustache.

His habits were declared to be above reproach, and Mrs. Pierce indignantly resented my suggestion that he might have run away. So did the local detective who had the case in hand. I held from the first to the theory that he had run away. He had been told to hurry back. He could reach the bank in a walk of fifteen minutes, having only two or three turns to make.

It was at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and he could be in no personal danger. No one could be found who had seen him between the house and the bank, although he was well known. But the best clew was found in Lane's room. There was a handful of sandy hair in a paper under the lavatory. There was another paper spotted with lather, in which were enough bristles to make a mustache. Behind an old trunk was a bottle which had contained hair-dye.

Mrs. Pierce received the money about ten o'clock in the forenoon, and she remarked to Lane that she would have him deposit it after dinner. He waited on the table at noon, and there was no change in his appearance, but between that time and two he shaved off his mustache, cut off a lot of his hair, applied the dye, and Mrs. Pierce remembered that he was muffled up as he went out, leaving by the side door.

Now came the hardest part of the work. When you know which way a criminal is heading it is quite easy to keep his trail, but when you can't say whether he is in New York or Omaha, or that he may not be hiding within two blocks of you, it is quite a different matter. From the servants in the house I learned that Lane had always declared he hated the very sight of cities and towns, and he had no care for fine clothes and society. He also had a great horror of the water. This seemed to argue that he would not head for Europe, as I at first feared. It was well known that he had a holy horror of the West, having read of savage Indians, prairie fires, grizzly bears, rattlesnakes, etc. That seemed to argue that he would not go West.

Would he go North or South? I was helped out of my dilemma in a curious way. I had been at every steamboat office and railroad depot, meeting with no success, and was standing in front of the Second National Bank, when a farmer-looking man accosted me with:

"What do you say about this bill? I say it's good and the old woman says it's bad."

It was a five he had, and the "old woman" sat in a wagon on the opposite side of the street.

"Why does she suspect it to be bad?" I asked, as I surveyed the bill.

"Well, it was give to me four or five days ago by a chap who rode out home with us, had supper, and then cut across to the railroad station. I shouldn't have charged him over seventy-five cents at the most, and his liberality seems queer."

I was dead certain from his first words that I had got track of my man. We went into the bank to satisfy him that the bill was all right, and then crossed to the wagon. I want to tell you that country people are head and shoulders above the average city residents in the matter of observation and in remembering what they see.

"Well, one reason why I suspected this man," said his wife, "was because his hair was dreadfully haggled and then dyed. Such botch work you never saw. His hair was all in streaks of black and red, and he'd got the dye on his ears and neck."

The fellow had tried to play smart in leaving the city by one of the highways, but accident had revealed his trail. He had taken the train at a station about fifteen miles away, and he had four days the start of me. The first move was to run out to the country station at which he had taken the train. I there found that he had made many inquiries about the northern and western part of the State, and had finally purchased a ticket for Fond du Lac.

The description of him was good, and I was about to buy a ticket for the same place and take a train due in half an hour when in came a boy who had been there on the evening when Lane bought his ticket. He was a lad who helped around the station, and it was plain that he had a good deal of native wit.

"Yes, that chap bought a ticket for Fond du Lac, but I don't think he went there," replied the lad when I began to question him.

"What makes you think he did not?"

"Because," he answered, as he handed down a folder from the rack, "he was studying his route, which goes to Portage city. I think he meant to take this folder along, but dropped it. See how he has marked it with pencil."

So he had. He could run up to Watertown and go through by way of Beaver Dam. He had marked the time of arrival at the junction and of the arrival at Portage, and it could not be that he would take all that trouble to throw any one off his trail. There was no one after him, and he could not argue that the boy would hold the marked folder against him.

I therefore changed my route to Portage city, and at the junction I got track of my man. He had no ticket, but had paid his fare in cash. It was night, and the state of his hair had not been noticed, but the conductor described Lane's general appearance, and said that he had changed a \$20 bill for him. He might go no further than Beaver Dam, and I got off there and looked around for a few hours.

No trace of him had been had, and I was at the depot to take the train, when a conversation between two young men became interesting.

"You ought to have told somebody," protested one.

"Yes, and been laughed at," replied the other.

"And he had ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes; double that."

"And he was counting it on the bed?"

"Yes."

"I'll bet he was a robber."

"Maybe; but he was off early in the morning. Well, so long. Tom; here's the train."

The one who had seen some one counting money was going west by my train, and I schemed to get a seat with him and draw him out.

He was a porter at one of the hotels in Portage, and he had seen a guest answering Lane's description counting such a lot of money that it covered half the bed.

The porter had made his observations through the keyhole of the door, and, being ashamed of himself, had hesitated to go to the landlord.

The man had arrived without baggage, but had there purchased a valise, and his nervous manner and the sight of

such money in his possession had led the porter to finally conclude that there was a mystery there somewhere, although he had not spoken of it to any one around the house.

The man had purchased a suit of coarse clothes, with hat and shoes to match, and in leaving had taken the highway leading toward Oshkosh.

He had purchased another bottle of hair-dye in Portage, but had apparently given his red hair up as a bad job. He not only left the bottle in his room, but by means of soap and water washed off what dye he had put on at Milwaukee.

Lane had given the landlord to understand that he was a hard-working young man who had started out to look for a job, but he had departed without fixing on anything definite.

He did not believe he would go to Oshkosh. He was acting like a man who reasoned that if he could hide himself away in the country for a few weeks his crime and his identity would both be forgotten.

To catch the embezzler without capturing his swag would have been no credit to me. He had several days the start of me, and had by this time got a job of some sort. I procured a rough suit of clothes, hired a horse, and set off on his trail. As he had gone on foot with a large valise in his hand it was easy to hear of him along the road. He headed toward Oshkosh for five or six miles, and then turned directly north.

It was in the fall of the year, and the roads were in bad condition, but he made twenty-four miles that first day, not stopping at all for dinner.

I went to the northeast for six miles, to the north for five miles, and then he turned due west, almost on a line with La Crosse, and went eight miles before stopping at an inn. I only made the same number of miles on horseback, but as I had to lie by the next forenoon on account of the rain, while I had good weather, I gained half a day on him.

He proceeded toward La Crosse for ten miles more, and then went forth two miles, and stayed over night with a farmer, and talked about going to work in a saw-mill.

Next day he headed due west, and reached the Wisconsin river at a hamlet called Little Bend. It was on the sixth day after he left Milwaukee that I located him, and he had then been at work in a saw-mill for a day and a half. I entered the hamlet on foot, as he had done, having a few extra clothes in a bundle, and it was soon known to the seventy-five or eighty population that I was in search of work.

The owner of the only store in the place also kept a saloon and a tavern, and under pretense of being footsore and used up, I remained idle for two or three days, although the mill owner was short of hands and desired me to go to work at once.

It may be thought strange that I did not at once arrest Lane and have done with it.

Had I overhauled him en route that would have been the plan, for the money would have been in his valise.

He had taken board at the tavern, and during my first half day there I had found his room open and his valise unlocked. There was nothing in it which any one would want to take away. He had, like a sharp man, taken his money out and planted it.

He could not justly suspect that I was after him, for after three or four days I went to work alongside of him and held him at a distance.

He tried hard to get acquainted with me, but I was taciturn and unsocial. He gave me an opportunity to ask him questions, but I refused to profit by it. I admitted, for a purpose, that I left Milwaukee four or five days behind him, and after seeming to reflect for a while, he asked:

"Was there any special news when you left?"

"I don't remember."

"No murders or robberies?"

"There was a mystery of some sort, I believe. Somebody drew a lot of money out of the bank, fell into the hands of a lawyer, and they were looking in the river and lake for his dead body."

"Hum!" he coughed, and that ended our conversation, though I did not fail to notice the look of gratification which crept over his face.

That he had hidden the treasure was certain.

I watched him closely during the day, and I saw that he was nervous and preoccupied. I expected he would go out to inspect his treasure at night, and I took my precautions that he should not escape me; but he made no move.

He went to work on Friday noon of one week, and I on Thursday of the next. When Sunday week came, it was a bright, warm day, and I made up my mind not to lose sight of him for an hour.

There were several acres of logs in the yard, and after breakfast I went to the mill, climbed up in the attic, and had the yard and the hamlet under my eye. At about ten o'clock Lane came down into the yard, wandered about in an aimless sort of way, though all the time keeping his eyes open, and by and by I saw him inspecting a huge log lying near a thorn-apple tree, which was the only tree or bush in the yard.

I had been hauling logs with the cattle to the bank and dumping them off for the elevator or car to carry them up the incline into the mill, and had noticed the big log.

It had been there for years, and was worthless.

Now that I saw Lane in the vicinity, I made up my mind that he had hidden his money close by, and I slipped out and went for a ramble in the woods.

That night at midnight, without anything having happened to create suspicion on Lane's part, I dressed myself and crept out of the tavern to make a hunt for the money.

On my way out I paused at his door, and he was breathing like a man fast asleep.

I had my revolver and a pair of handcuffs ready to take with me, but missed them after I got outside. Everything about was so quiet that I set off, thinking to be back with the money in a few minutes.

The big log lay within twenty feet of the bank. There was a hollow in one end, but no money. The other end was solid. I climbed over it and passed around it, and had just discovered a hollow which had been the base of a big limb, when I got a blow on the neck which rolled me over and over for ten feet.

Before I could get up Lane was upon me.

He was a good deal the larger and stouter man, but he could not hold me still. I could roll under him, and, while his object seemed to be to clutch my throat, I gave him two good blows in the face and got to my feet.

Not a word was spoken by either of us. We stood for a moment gasping for breath, and then he rushed at me like an enraged bull, and we both clinched. He handled me almost as if I had been a boy, and it wasn't over a minute before we were on the bank above water twelve feet deep.

There was a thin skim of ice over it, and the man who went in there could not live long.

In a boxing match I could have got the better of Lane. In such a clinch his brute strength was a terrible advantage.

His object was, of course, to pitch me into the river, but I hung to him so well that he was baffled. We were still struggling on the brink when a great slice of the bank gave way and we went into the ice-cold water, both having a firm hold, but I on top.

Lane must have had his mouth open, for he began to strangle at once, and if I ever worked hard for three minutes it was to save him.

He was unconscious when I got him to the bank and pulled him up, while I was as good as frozen.

By a liberal use of my voice I aroused three or four men and we got Lane to the hotel, and worked over him for half an hour before he opened his eyes. Then I tucked him up, gave him a big drink of hot whisky and went out and got the money. He had spent about \$40 of it.

Not a word did he reply as I told him who I was, who he was, and showed him the money. Not a word did he utter all the way back to Milwaukee, and it was only after Mrs. Pierce had refused to prosecute him and he was turned loose that he sullenly muttered:

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